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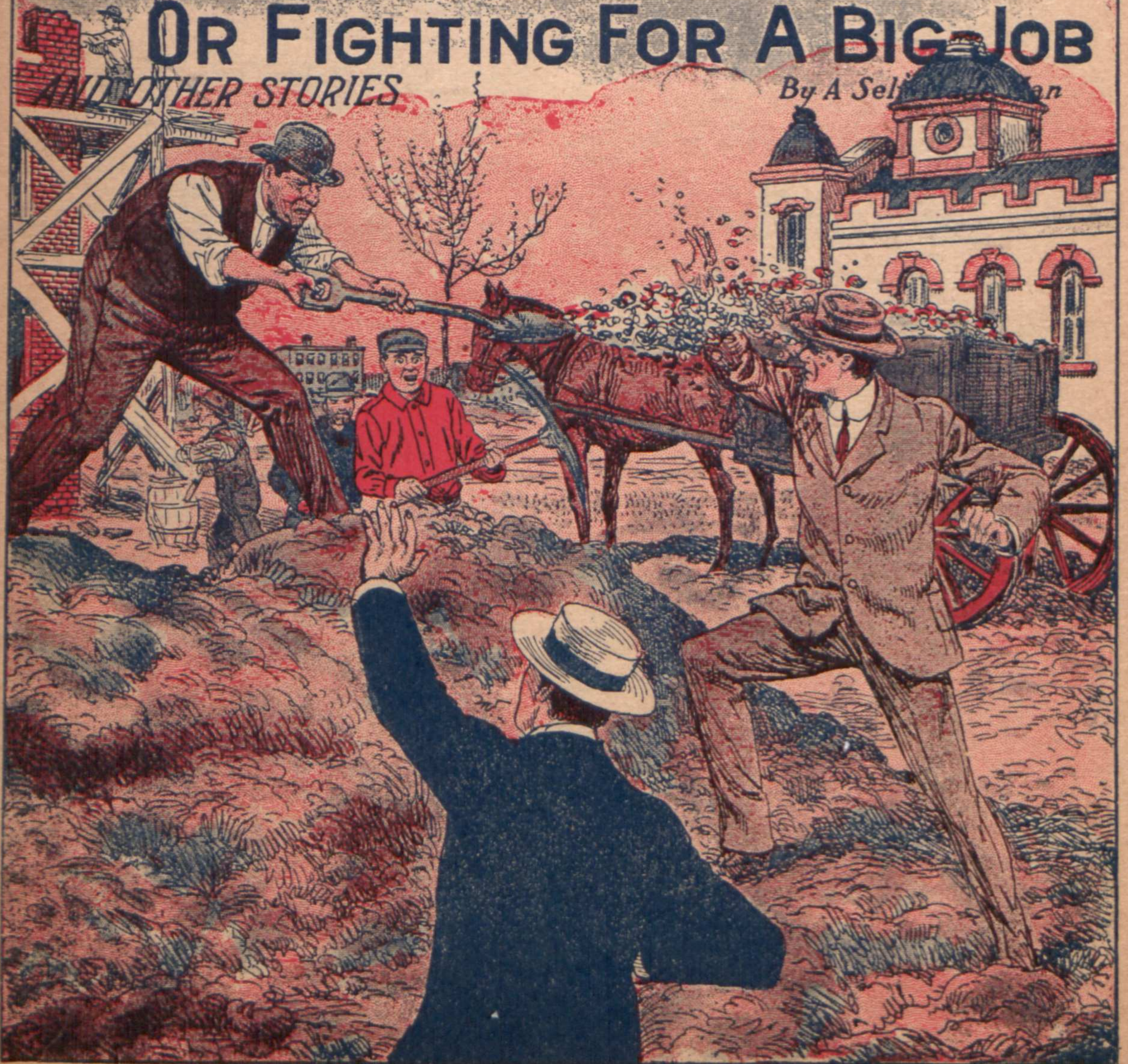
FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

CONTRACTOR BOB OR FIGHTING FOR A BIG JOB

AND OTHER STORIES

By A. Seligman



"You're an insulting rascal!" cried Bob, angrily. The laborer's reply was a shovelful of dirt flung directly at him. "Here, what are you doing?" shouted the young contractor. "Tryin' to stop yer jaw!" grinned the fellow. "I'll stop yours."

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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NEW YORK, MAY 12, 1922

Price 7 Cents

CONTRACTOR BOB

OR, FIGHTING FOR A BIG JOB

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Introduces the Hero, Heroine and Second Villain.

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you home this afternoon, Miss Summers?" asked a sprucely-dressed young man of the pretty stenographer of the contracting firm of Peck, Gilligan & Co., of the town of Westlake.

"I prefer to go home by myself, Mr. Peck," replied the girl, distantly.

"Nonsense. Let me go with you. I've something important to tell you," insisted the young man, who was the only son of the head of the firm, and represented the Co.

"I don't care to have your company," said the girl, definitely.

"Oh, I say, why do you persist in treating me so coolly? You know I can do a whole lot for you. My father will raise your wages if I ask him to."

"I am not asking for any favors, Mr. Peck," answered the young lady, coldly. "I understand my business and I am giving general satisfaction. I expect the firm will raise my wages in the usual course of business."

"Oh, you do? Well, maybe you'll be disappointed. My father is the financial boss, and he isn't paying his employees any more than he can help. You're not likely to get a raise unless I use my influence in your behalf—then you'll get it, for my father won't refuse any request I make of him. So you see it's to your interest to stand well with me. Now you'll permit me to go with you."

"No, sir, I will not."

"What's the matter with you? Don't you think I'm good enough for you?" said Henry Peck, with a sneer. "There isn't another girl in town but would consider herself lucky to have me notice her in the way I do you."

"I don't ask you to notice me. I'd rather you wouldn't."

"You're putting on an awful lot of airs for a working girl," said the young man, angrily. "Don't you know I'm the junior partner of the firm?"

"I am aware of that fact."

"Then you ought to consider the honor I am bestowing on you by escorting you to your home."

"The honor quite overpowers me, that is why I do not care to avail myself of it," said the girl, with a touch of sarcasm in her tones.

Her tone and manner aroused the young man's anger.

"Maybe you'd rather have Bob Barron see you home?" he said in a tone of concentrated jealous rage.

"If he were going my way I should not refuse to walk with him," she replied. "He, like myself, is only an employee of your firm. We are on the same footing, and I have found him to be a gentleman."

Whether it was the way the girl spoke, or because she called Bob Barron, the young graduate civil engineer, a gentleman, we cannot say, but Peck said:

"Do you mean to insinuate that I am not a gentleman?"

The girl met his gaze steadily as she answered:

"I am insinuating nothing, Mr. Peck, but if you are a gentleman you will not seek to press your company where it is not desired."

"Indeed!" he sneered. "I see how it is. You're sweet on that young engineer Gilligan hired a few weeks ago. Before that you were throwing your smiles at Bert Baker, our surveyor's assistant. You think because Barron is drawing more money than Baker he's a good card to play. You know you're pretty and you are trying to turn the fellow's head—make him think you are stuck on him, but all you are looking for is to soak his pocketbook for a good time."

"You're an insulting puppy!" cried the fair stenographer. "Don't you dare ever to address me again. If you do I'll report your conduct to your father."

She was brushing past him when, with an ejaculation of fury, he seized her tightly by the arm—so tightly that he drew from her a cry of pain.

"You'll report me to my father, will you?" he hissed. "I'll see that you are fired before that happens, you stuck-up—"

"Let me go—you hurt me. How dare you touch me!" cried the young lady with tears in her eyes.

"I'll let you go when I feel like it, miss," he said.

"I think you'll let her go now, Mr. Peck," said a cool voice behind them.

The junior partner turned half around and saw Bob Barron, the young civil engineer, at his elbow.

"You!" he gritted.

"Release the young lady, please. I am surprised you should act rudely to her," continued Bob.

"Who asked you to butt in?" said Peck, angrily.

"It is a gentleman's place to interfere in a lady's behalf."

"Do you call yourself a gentleman?"

"I leave others to judge that fact. Let go of Miss Summers' arm. Can't you see you are hurting her?"

"Mind your own business."

"I consider this my business. I won't allow you or anybody else to mistreat Miss Summers—or any other young lady, for that matter," said Bob, in a different tone—one that meant business.

"You've got a nerve to talk to me—one of your bosses—this way."

"I do not recognize you now as one of the firm, but as a person who is taking unfair liberties with a friend of mine. Since you won't let her go when you're asked to, I'll make you."

Bob stepped forward, and by a quick move broke Peck's grasp on the girl's arm, and gently swung her out of his reach.

"You had better go, Miss Summers," he said. "I will see that he does not follow you."

"You will see it!" hissed Peck, his face convulsed with rage, for Bob had hurt his fingers. "You common scrub, I'll see that you're fired right off the reel. Get out, you beggar!"

He raised his foot and made a vicious kick at the young engineer. Had he been cooler he might have noticed that Bob was prepared for anything. The plucky boy side-stepped and at the same time caught Peck's leg and gave it an upward fling. That threw the junior partner off his balance and he fell across the threshold of the office door, striking his back on the sill with a whack that took his breath away. Bob turned away and, taking Miss Summers by the arm, for she had hesitated to leave when she scented trouble for her champion, led her from the spot.

"I hope he did not hurt you much," he said, softly to the beautiful girl, who showed no objection to his company.

"He did hurt me. He acted like a brute. I don't know what I should have done had you not come to my assistance. It was so good of you, and I am very grateful to you. But I fear you have made an enemy of him, and he is in a position to injure you."

"I'm not worrying about that, Miss Summers. No man, if he be as big as a house, shall insult you in my presence," said Bob.

"You have done me a service I never shall forget," she said, softly.

"It was nothing. Don't think about it any more."

"But I will think of it. You have done what I might expect of a brother if I had one. I thank you with all my heart, and my mother will appreciate the service as much as I. It was so brave, so manly of you!"

"Miss Summers, I don't want you to worry any over what I have done in your behalf. If you wish to reward me, slightly, permit me the honor of your friendship. Let me know you a little better than circumstances have hitherto permitted. But remember I don't insist on this if you had rather not. I am a stranger almost in this town. I came direct from Boston in answer to the firm's advertisement, and as I've been here but a short time my acquaintance is naturally a bit limited. In fact, I have made but one friend, and that is

Bert Baker, a splendid chap, our surveyor's assistant. If—if I could hope that you, Miss Summers, would—that is——"

He stopped as if at a loss to put what was in his mind.

"I understand, Mr. Barron. You wish that we should be friends. I see no reason why we should not if—you believe I am not the kind of girl Mr. Peck called me."

"I'll swear you are not. You are just the kind of girl I would go through fire and water for. I beg your pardon for being so expressive," he said, hastily, observing the rich flush that mantled her cheeks. "You are not displeased at what I said?" he added, earnestly.

"Displeased! I couldn't be displeased at anything you——"

She stopped abruptly and her confusion was evident.

"Thank you, Miss Summers. We are friends, then?"

"Yes."

"You have made me very happy, for your friendship means more to me than I can express. Have you lived long in Westlake?"

"I was born here."

She told him that her father, who was dead two years, had been a contracting carpenter, in partnership with Gilligan, of the firm she and Bob were working for. He met his death through an accident on a large job he was superintending. Gilligan wound up the affairs of the partnership, and Miss Summers told Bob that her mother was greatly surprised to find that there was hardly \$500 coming to her out of her husband's interest in a business he had always represented as a growing and comparatively profitable one. She protested, but Gilligan offered to submit the books to the inspection of an expert at his own expense. After Mrs. Summers had been advised to take him up he discovered that he had made an error in his accounting and paid her \$500 more. The widow let it go at that, and Gilligan went on with the business on his own hook till Peck, who was a wealthy lawyer and politician, saw certain possibilities that induced him to form a partnership with Gilligan.

The possibilities proved to be town and county contracts that Peck was to control in one way or another. Peck, Gilligan & Co. immediately became the most important firm of contractors in Westlake. By the time Miss Summers had given Bob some insight into her family history, the two young people reached the cottage owned by Mrs. Summers. The stenographer asked the young engineer in to meet her mother. When Mrs. Summers learned of the service Bob had rendered her daughter she expressed her gratitude in no uncertain way. The boy was so nice and gentlemanly that she took quite a fancy to him, and invited him to call on them whenever he found it convenient to do so. Bob accepted the invitation with alacrity. It showed that he had made a good impression on the young lady's mother, and Bob metaphorically shook hands with himself, for it means a whole lot to any young man to stand well with the mother of the girl he likes. Bob didn't stay long, for it was supper time, and after remarking to the young lady, whose first name was Nellie, that he would see her at the office in the

morning, he took his leave and reached his boarding-house just as the dinner-bell rang.

CHAPTER II.—Peck, Sr., Censures Bob.

About eleven next morning, while Bob was making some calculations for an estimate the firm was going to submit, the office boy came to his desk and told him that Mr. Peck, Sr., wanted to see him in his office. Bob responded at once, and the head of the firm received him in a frigid way. Mr. Peck was a well-built, well-fed man of perhaps fifty. He was always scrupulously dressed, and his manner was pompous. Unless a caller was somebody considerably above the common, Mr. Peck received him as a king might a humble subject, condescendingly. The visitor was expected to be impressed by the honor of having been admitted to his presence, and permitted to breathe the same air.

"Young man," said Mr. Peck, frowning upon Bob, "my son complained to me that you not only insulted him last evening just after the office closed, but that you actually knocked him down. What have you to say about it?"

"Since you have brought the matter up, I will tell you the whole story, and leave you to judge your son's actions," said Bob, who thereupon rehearsed all that happened between Peck, Jr., and Miss Summers, and between himself and the junior partner, using young Peck's language as near as he could remember it.

"Hum!" said Mr. Peck. "You have exaggerated my son's conduct. He is a young gentleman, and I am sure he would not conduct himself as you have described."

"Call Miss Summers and ask her."

"I will see Miss Summers later, if I should deem it necessary to get her version of the affair. You assert that my son made a kick at you, and that in avoiding it you caught his foot and upset him. He admitted to me that, angered by your insulting behavior, he did not forget himself so far as to raise his foot, but he said he had no intention of kicking you, but you took advantage of his move to seize his leg and overthrow him with brutal force, with the result that he was considerably injured by the fall. The attitude you displayed toward my son was such as to incur grave censure. You appear to forget, young man, that he is a member of the firm that employs you. That fact alone makes your conduct extremely reprehensible. I am surprised that you should display such an aggressive disposition. I shall take the matter under consideration, and perhaps, after I have consulted with Mr. Gilligan, we shall find it advisable to let you go. That is all, sir. You can go back to your desk," and the head of the firm dismissed the young engineer with a wave of his hand.

"I suppose I may consider myself as good as bounced," thought Bob, as he left the private room. "I dare say Peck, Jr., has insisted on that in revenge for what I did to him. Oh, well, it can't be helped. Were I face to face with the same conditions again I would repeat my line of action. I shall be sorry to lose my job, for it isn't half a bad one, but I shall be more sorry if I have

to leave Westlake and the society of Miss Summers, as well as to cut loose from Bert Baker, who is a first-class fellow. I wonder if Peck, Jr., will have Miss Summers discharged, too—that is if his pull with the firm is strong enough to bring that about. He is pretty sore on her because he can't have his way with her. He is one of those kind of chaps who will do anything to get square for a real or fancied injury."

Bob heard nothing more from the head of the house that day. Shortly before five, when the office closed for the day, Baker came in after having been out all day with the firm's surveyor. He came to Bob's desk as the young engineer was putting his books and papers away.

"Haven't seen you for a day and a half," he said. "How are things?"

"Kind of rocky with me," replied Bob.

"Rocky? How is that?" asked Bert, in some surprise.

"I've had a serious run-in with Peck, Jr., and the indications are that my services will be dispensed with."

"You don't mean it!" cried Bert, aghast at the idea of Bob leaving the shop. "Tell me all about it."

Bob rehearsed the incidents of the previous afternoon.

"He didn't get any more than was coming to him," said Bert, referring to the junior partner.

"That's my opinion. But as he's a member of the firm, and, moreover, the son of the head of the house, it is a dangerous matter for a common employee, like myself, to hand him his just deserts."

"I wouldn't worry. It may blow over. You're an uncommonly smart engineer, and I doubt if the firm could replace you for anything like the wages you are receiving. Peck, Gilligan & Co. are making lots of money, but they are not blowing any extraordinary part of it in on their employees. I doubt if the Co. gets as much as he thinks he is entitled to, though he doubtless gets a lot more than he earns," said Bert.

"Earns?" laughed Bob. "He's more ornamental than useful. He doesn't know the first thing about engineering. His education seems to have ended at the High School, at the foot of his class."

"That's right. His mission in life seems to be to bask in the sunshine of his father's importance—and dough. As far as I can see, the only practical man in the firm is Gilligan, and he isn't so much when you sift him down. As a master carpenter he appears to be a success, but two-thirds of our work is outside his line. He has no knowledge of civil engineering, so that all the fine work, as I call it, falls on you."

"You mean the responsibility of figuring on the contracts?"

"Of course. And you aren't paid half what you're worth. If the firm fires you, on Peck, Jr.'s account, the firm will make a great mistake."

"Oh, I don't know. The woods are full of technical school graduates who will work cheap to get a start," said Bob.

"How many of them could fill your shoes?"

"Never mind how many—a good many, I dare say—the firm only wants one."

"In my opinion the firm will have some trouble

getting that one if they let you go. Besides, it would be an outrage that you should be discharged for defending our stenographer from insult, even if the insulter was the head boss' son."

"There are two sides to every question, and my side doesn't count for much against Peck, Jr.'s, with his father."

"Oh, well, as I said before, don't worry. Peck, Sr., will probably consult with Gililgan before he makes any move to let you go, and Gilligan is likely to object. He's the man who is really running the business."

The boys put on their hats and followed Nellie Summers out of the office.

"Do you object to our accompanying you a block or two, Miss Summers?" asked Bob.

"Object! Why, of course not," she laughed. "Why should I?"

"Well, I heard you tell Peck, Jr., yesterday, when he asked to be allowed to escort you to your cottage, that you preferred to go home alone."

"If his company wasn't congenial to me, wasn't I right in declining it?" said the pretty girl smilingly.

"You certainly were," said Bert, as the three walked off together. "This is a free country."

"You haven't seen Mr. Peck, Jr., to-day, have you, Mr. Barron?" said the young lady. "I don't think he was at the office."

"No, I didn't see him, but his father called me into his private room and told me that his son had accused me of insulting him in a ruffianly manner. I offered my explanation, and when he expressed doubts as to its accuracy, I told him to ask you about the trouble. Did he mention the subject to you?"

"No; he didn't say a word about it," replied the girl. "Was he angry with you?" she added anxiously.

"He wasn't pleased," replied Bob.

Miss Summers looked narrowly at Bob's face, but saw in it no indication of anticipated trouble, and she felt reassured. The conversation reverted to other topics, and two blocks from the office the boys parted from her.

"She's a fine girl," said Bob as they went on their way.

"Bet your boots she is. I guess you've made a ten-strike with her," replied Bert. "Any girl is sure to think well of a fellow who takes her part."

"I'd take the part of any girl, or woman, either, under the same circumstances. It just happened to be Miss Summers."

"I've an idea she's been taken with you from the time you made your bow in the office."

"What makes you think so?"

"She and I have always been very friendly, and she talks to me more than the others when I'm in the office. From the way she speaks about you I notice that your refined deportment has made an impression on her. Now you'd think that Peck, Jr., would be politeness itself, for he travels in the best society of this town, but you have seen how he carries himself. He may keep a check on himself when he's in the company of his betters, but he certainly doesn't play the gentleman to any great extent at the office."

"He isn't worth discussing."

"That's right, he isn't. I should think, though, that his father would send him to Boston to learn

to be a civil engineer. One member of the firm ought to be up in the technical details of the business, and now is the time for him to get wise."

"Some persons had rather enjoy themselves when they're young than prepare for the future. This is often the case with chaps who have rich fathers, and who think the world will never hold a care for them."

"Some of those chaps find out before they are gray how foolish they were. A fellow can go through money mighty quick these days. If he spends more than his income he is bound to come to grief."

"You nor I won't set the woods on fire with the amount of money we'll have to spend for some time yet," laughed Bob. "We have to hoe our own row, for we have no rich father to fall back on."

"Nor any rich relative whose death will put us on Easy street. Well, here's where our ways part for the time being. So long. Come around and see me some night soon. I don't stray from the roost very often, only on Wednesdays and Sundays, when my best girl looks for me to call."

Bert turned up the cross street while Bob continued straight on to his boarding-house, where he arrived some little time before the bell rang for dinner.

CHAPTER III.—The Trick That Was Worked on Bob.

About eleven that evening an automobile containing half a dozen young fellows stopped in front of Bob's boarding-house. One of them got out and rang the bell. The servants had all gone to bed and no one responded. The young fellow kept on ringing, however, and after an interval the landlady made her appearance in a wrapper.

"What do you want?" she snapped, for she did not relish being routed out of her bed at that hour.

"We want Bob Barron. Tell him Bert Baker is at the door and wants him to take a ride with some friends in a car," said the young fellow.

"I guess he's gone to bed," said the missus.

"Tell him to be a sport and get up," said the young man.

"This is a nice time to rouse your friend up to go riding," sniffed the landlady, who did not approve of such nocturnal affairs.

"That's all right. Nothing like enjoying life while you're young. I suppose you used to go straw riding in your time with the boys at any old hour."

"The idea! Just as if I would have done such a thing!" she answered, highly offended at the suggestion.

"All the girls do it when they're young and good-looking, why not you? You don't look so old now. I'll bet when you're fixed up you don't look over thirty."

As the lady was on the shady side of forty-five, she felt quite complimented, and permitted a smile to flit across her features.

"I'll deliver your message," she said, in a more agreeable tone.

"Thank you, ma'am. I knew you would."

"Are you Bert Baker?" asked the landlady,

who, having seen Bert several times, did not believe the visitor was he.

"No, ma'am; Baker is in the car yonder. My name is Jack Ketch."

"I'll tell Mr. Barron, but if he's sensible I think he'll stay in bed."

The landlady went upstairs to a back room and knocked on Bob's door. The young engineer had not gone to bed, but was reading a book on engineering. The landlady gave him the message from the late visitor. Bob was surprised, for he understood that Bert was not in the habit of running around with a night crowd. However, it was quite possible that he had been picked up somewhere by a party of his friends with a car, and that he wanted him (Bob) to go along.

"All right, Mrs. Jenkins," he said to the landlady. "I'll go down and see Bert, and possibly I might go off for a little while with him and his party."

The landlady returned to her room and looked in the glass to see if she looked as old as she was, and while she was determining this momentous question, Bob went to the door with his hat and coat on. He found a young man there who was a stranger to him, and saw an auto with five others in it some yards away.

"You're Bob Barron?" asked the stranger, in a chipper tone.

"Yes. Where is Bert Baker?"

"In the car. He thought you'd like to take a ride. We'll be back in an hour. Come on."

As it was a fine night, Bob had no objection to taking the ride, and, shutting the door, he followed the young fellow to the car.

"Where are you, Bert?" said Bob.

"Here I am," replied a muffled voice. "Get in."

Bob got in, the other chap followed, and the car was off like a shot. The next thing Bob knew a noose dropped over his head and arms and was drawn tight. Then somebody pulled a light bag over his head and he was shoved back on the seat and held. The young engineer was greatly surprised at this treatment, but taking it for a joke, offered no resistance. The noose around his arms was secured, and Bob heard a good deal of hilarity around him, which further convinced him that he was the victim of a joke, and he waited patiently for it to come to an end.

The car went on at a high speed till the suburbs was reached, and then started out on the country road. Two chaps were on the front seat, one of whom, bearing a strong likeness to Henry Peck, Jr., was acting as the chauffeur. Two were on the centre seat, holding Bob between them, and two were on the back seat. The car was a big high-power touring one, and was painted red. When Bob felt that the joke, as far as he was concerned, had proceeded far enough, he began to make a demonstration as well as he could. This produced no effect except merriment, and he was still held a prisoner. Bob then called out through the bag, but received no attention. He gave the matter up and let things take their course, for he was too much of a man to make a fuss over a joke, even if he was greatly incommoded by it. He knew it was the tendency of some lads to carry matters to the limit without reflecting on the feelings of the victim. The car scooted down the road, and after covering nearly ten miles, power

was shut off and the speed gradually decreased. A narrow road, in poor condition, and only used by the farmers, was reached and the car turned into at a slow gait. The road ran somewhat uphill, and finally reached the top of the incline.

"There's the old mill yonder," said the chap at the wheel, and his voice sounded like Peck, Jr.'s.

The mill in question was a ruinous edifice of stone, of ancient date, standing in a hollow back from the road. The big wheel which once turned its simple mechanism was missing, for it had fallen to pieces, and the dammed stream which furnished the water power to drive it was now reduced to a small rivulet, almost dry at that season of the year. The remains of the dam were still to be seen, but most of it had been filled in and was now under cultivation. A short run down the hill and the car turned to the open space in front of the open door of the mill and stopped. All hands got out and Bob was bundled out with little ceremony. He wondered when the joke was coming to an end. He thought it had gone far enough—too far, in fact. He was stood on his feet and marched forward between two chaps who had hold of his arms. As he made up his mind to see the thing through, he went along willingly enough.

"He's a sport, all right," said one of his conductors, in an approving tone. "I expected we were going to have trouble with him, but he's been as docile as a lamb. I say, John Henry, you ought to let up a little on him. I'll bet he's a good fellow. He's taken the joke like a major."

"Oh, dry up," replied John Henry in a surly tone.

The entire party entered the mill and then stopped while one of them lighted a lantern he had brought from the car. Bob realized that he was inside a building, for he felt the plank flooring he was standing on. He wondered where the building was. It must be some distance outside of Westlake, though in what direction he had no idea, for the car had gone at a good speed. He heard the bunch talking, but could not make out what they were saying.

"Come on," said John Henry, leading the way with the lantern.

They passed from the room into a wide passage, and to a flight of stairs going down into the cellar, and Bob was compelled to descend with the others. The floor of the cellar was composed of hard dirt and the debris that had accumulated for years. Bob easily surmised that he was down in the foundation of a building. He was pushed up against a post, which was in bad shape, but seemed to be strong enough from the looks of it. It was really little better than punk inside, and this fact would have been noted had the light of the lantern been flashed critically upon it. There was considerable slack to the rope holding Bob's arms to his body, and this was used to bind the young engineer firmly to the post. Then Bob felt his handkerchief withdrawn from his hip pocket. The bag was slowly lifted off his head, but before it was above the level of his chin his eyes were bandaged by his own handkerchief. The bag was then cast aside.

"Hasn't this joke gone far enough?" said Bob, now able to talk with effect.

A roar of laughter greeted his remark.

"This is no joke, you lobster. We have brought you here to initiate you into the Order of the Fum Foozles. All strangers who come to Westlake are obliged to join this secret society if they stay here for any time," said a voice that sounded familiar to Bob, though at the moment he couldn't place it.

"If my friend, Bert Baker, is a member of it, and has gone through the initiation I won't make any kick, but I hope you chaps will treat me right," said Bob.

"Oh, we'll treat you right, don't you worry. You have passed through the first degree, and we will now put you through the second," said the familiar voice.

Bob felt the light rise before his face. What produced this light he didn't know, but it had not seemed very bright until it was flashed upon his face. Something wet and clinging, like a paint brush, was drawn across his forehead amid snickers from those present. This was repeated all over his face except where his handkerchief ran, and also to his neck from ear to ear, and under his chin. A soft rag then was rubbed over his skin. There was then a pause of about five minutes in operations.

"Is it dry?" asked the familiar voice.

Bob felt a finger touch his face in several places.

"Yes," some one replied.

"Very good," said the first voice. "The neophyte will now be ornamented with the secret symbols of the Order of Fum Foozle."

From the sensations that followed Bob was sure that something was being painted on his forehead, on his cheeks, chin, and finally that stripes were drawn vertically down his throat half a dozen times. The performance aroused a lot of merriment on the part of the bunch who were observing the proceedings, and the young engineer did not doubt but he had been made a ridiculous-looking object. The last touch having been applied, the familiar voice cried:

"Hail to the new member of the Fum Foozles."

The words were repeated by the other five in solemn chorus.

"The neophyte has now successfully endured the application of the second degree. The third, or culminating one—that of solitude and silence—is now in order. Brothers, we will withdraw to the council chamber above and there await the moment when the neophyte, having endured the ordeal of the third degree, shall be released and invested with the regalia of the Order, and provided with the pass-words. Follow me, brothers," said the familiar voice.

The speaker with the lantern started for the stairs, and the others, save the last, followed slowly in single file to avoid any obstructions that lay in their path. The fifth leaned up against Bob and whispered in his ear:

"Say, chappie, this is a frame-up. I believe you're a good fellow, so I am putting you wise to the fact that we're going to leave in the car right away. I've cut the rope half through to help you out. As soon as we've gone a tug or two will release you. You're in the old mill, twelve miles from town. Walk up the hill and cut across the fields to your left at an angle—that

will bring you to the county road, and save you two miles. Wish you luck, chappie."

"Hello, Chester, what are you hanging back there for?" cried a voice from the stairs.

"Fixing my shoe lace which came loose," replied the lad who had whispered to Bob. "I'm coming now."

Bob felt the handkerchief pulled off his eyes, and he saw the party on the stairs waiting for the dilatory one. The chap with the lantern raised it and flashed the light toward the one behind. That brought his face well into the halo of the rays, and Bob recognized him as Henry Peck, Jr., the leader of the proceedings.

CHAPTER IV.—The Japanned Tin Box.

Bob understood the situation now thoroughly. The junior partner of the firm had taken this means of getting back at him for what he had done the afternoon before.

"I hope he feels better after it," muttered Bob, as the light and the young men vanished up the stairs. "One of the bunch appears to be a pretty decent fellow. He put me wise to the game, and told me he had partially cut the rope so that with a little effort on my part I can escape from this predicament. I'd like to know who he is. One of them called him Chester. I'll remember the name, and maybe I'll run against him some time, which will give me the chance to thank him."

He heard light footfalls pass across the floor over his head, and then silence. This, however, was broken by the noise made by the auto in getting under way. That sound died away in a few moments and then complete silence ensued. Bob judged it time to get busy and he gave the rope a tug, then a second and finally a third, but it still held.

"I wonder if that chap fooled me about having cut the rope. No, I don't think he did. I guess he didn't cut deep enough. I'll have to make a stronger effort."

Taking a full breath Bob gave his bonds a tremendous tug. Instead of the rope giving away the post did, falling in ruins and throwing him to the ground. Something hard and weighty struck the ground at his side and fell over on him.

"That must be a heavy stone," he thought. "If that had dropped on my back it might have broken it, and that would have ended my career of usefulness."

It was a simple matter now for him to get rid of the rope. He sat up and pulled it from around his body. Then he pulled out his match-safe and struck a light. He looked to see if it really was a stone which had narrowly missed falling on him. To his great surprise it was an oblong japanned box, with the key hanging from the handle by a small steel chain.

"I wonder how this thing came to be in such a place as the cellar of the old mill?" he asked himself. "I must see what's in it. Looks as if it held something of value."

The keyhole was so clogged up with dirt and rust that it was impossible to insert the key.

"Oh, well, I guess it's worth while taking the box back to the house with me. It holds some-

thing more weighty than papers, and I'm quite curious to learn what it is," said Bob, striking another match to light his way to the stairs.

It didn't take him long to reach the outside of the old mill. He had heard about the ancient ruin from Bert, who had lived all his life in Westlake. Over the door, and almost obliterated by time and the weather, it bore the date 1812—the year it was built. That was almost 100 years before the time of our story. Bob had intended to visit it some time and go all over it, for he was interested in old architectural antiques. Now he had visited it against his will, and under circumstances which were not favorable for the inspection he had promised himself. As he figured it must be around midnight, he lost no time in looking the mill over in the starlight, but started to make his way back to town. He reached the road and stood for a few moments looking up the hill, when two men, whose appearance proclaimed them to be tramps, started up out of the grass close by and looked at him.

"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" cried one of them. "That ain't a man, it's a ghost! Look at its face! Oh, heavens!"

In another moment the tramps were making tracks down the road. Bob was astonished, for he had forgotten all about the facial decoration he had received at the hands of Peck, Jr., and his friends. Even after hearing the tramp's exclamation, "Look at his face!" he did not apply the words to anything out of the ordinary with himself.

"I must have startled those chaps good," he chuckled. "They took me for a ghost. Well, there's that hill that Chester told me to follow to the top and then cut across the fields diagonally to the left. Here she goes."

He started ahead, but the box seemed to grow heavier as he proceeded, and after changing it from one hand to the other, he was glad to put it down for a spell when he reached the summit of the hill. He had to rest twice on his way across the fields, and once more when he came to the road at a point about nine miles from Westlake. It would have taken him till long after daylight to reach town with that box had not luck befriended him. A buggy came toward him. An elderly doctor who lived on the outskirts of Westlake was returning from a hurry call sent in by an old patient. Bob welcomed the approach of the vehicle, for he saw the chance of a ride, and a lift under the circumstances was the nearest wish to his heart. He waited till the buggy came up, and then hailed the occupant.

"Will you give me a ride as far as you are going, sir?" he said. "This box is mighty heavy, and I'm going to Westlake."

The doctor looked at him sharply and suspiciously.

"What have you got your face painted up in that hideous fashion for?" he asked abruptly.

"My face—painted!" cried Bob, looking puzzled.

"Yes, you look like the Wild Man of Borneo in a circus side-show. To say the truth, young man, I don't know as I fancy you for a companion. You may be a disreputable character. At any rate, you look like one in the face, though your clothes are very respectable. Don't attempt to get in unless I give you leave. I have a revolver

and know how to use it. What are you doing out here at this late hour? And what's in that box you are carrying? It looks heavy."

Bob by this time had recalled what had been done to him in the cellar of the old mill.

"Well, sir, if I look anything like you have described, I don't wonder you are suspicious of me," he said. "I am the victim of a low-down practical joke, but I know the chief perpetrator, and he and I are likely to have a run-in over it. My name is Robert Barron. I came from Boston six weeks ago to fill the position of civil engineer for the contracting firm of Peck, Gilligan & Co. I live at Mrs. Jenkins's boarding-house on High street. At eleven to-night, just as I was about to turn in, an automobile containing six young fellows drove up to the house, and one of them asked for me. He sent word that a particular friend of mine was in the car and wanted me to join the party for a short night ride. I fell into the trap, and was made prisoner the moment I stepped into the car. They took me to the old mill, painted my face as you see it, and left me bound to a post in the cellar. As soon as they left I tried to get free. My struggles broke down the post, which must have been rotten. I found this case these, and as I think it might hold something of value, I am carrying it home with me. It is rather heavy, and as I'm quite a ways outside of town, you couldn't do me a bigger favor than to give me a ride as far as you are going."

"I accept your explanation. Jump in. I can see by your talk that you are a young gentleman. You have been treated pretty roughly, I should imagine," said the doctor.

"Will you strike a match and see if you can tell what my face has been decorated with?" said Bob.

The doctor did so.

"I should judge that a coating of bismuth was first applied to make a white ground on which to apply red and black figures of cabalistic design. The markings were doubtless made with grease paint. You can stop at my house and I'll restore your countenance to its original state. Do you know whether the jokers first put grease on your face to fill up the pores? Bismuth is a very poisonous preparation, and should not be applied directly on the skin, for the pores would absorb a part of it. You need not feel nervous, however, for a single application of the stuff would not do you much harm."

Bob replied that something moist and sticky had first been applied with a brush, or what felt like a brush; that something had been rubbed on with a cloth, after which the decorator had proceeded with his work.

"I was blindfolded during the operation, so I really don't know what was done to me," he concluded.

The doctor told Bob his name and profession, and they became quite friendly during the drive. He said he lived about three-quarters of a mile from High street, and Bob was glad he had no further than that to walk. On reaching the doctor's home he helped the physician put his team in the stable, and then the doctor took him to his study, and with the aid of grease removed the stuff from the boy's face. Some warm water completed the business, and Bob, after thanking

the doctor, whose name was Brown, took his leave with the box and made his way home, where he arrived about two o'clock. He locked the box in his trunk, turned in and was soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER V.—Peck, Jr., Tries to Get Square With the Stenographer.

Bob turned up at the office in the morning just as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened to him during the night. In the course of an hour, or about nine o'clock, Peck, Jr., appeared and looked over at Bob's desk. He seemed greatly surprised to see the young engineer on hand as usual. He supposed he was still bound to the post in the cellar of the old mill. Clearly somebody must have released Barron, for Peck, Jr., was sure that Bob couldn't have freed himself. He suspected that one of his pals must have gone out to the mill early that morning in a car and brought the boy back to town. He was mad about it, for he meant that Bob should remain at the mill all day, and learn what it was to go without food for twenty-four hours. He felt that half of the satisfaction he had anticipated getting out of Bob was gone. Well, he would have the young engineer discharged, at any rate. His father was not opposed to it, and all that was needed to settle the matter was Gilligan's consent. Gilligan, however, was away in Boston on business, but he would be back by Saturday morning. So Peck, Jr., went into his father's room and sat down at the desk there as though he were the chief boss. There were a number of letters awaiting attention, and the young man opened and read them. Then he called Nellie Summers in and dictated replies.

"One moment," he said, as she started to leave. "Sit down."

She resumed her seat.

"I suppose you think you have it on me because your new fellow interfered between us the other afternoon," said the junior partner, in a disagreeable tone. "If you do you'll find out your mistake."

"I don't wish to talk about the matter," she replied, flushing up. "If you have finished with your dictation I'll return to my desk."

"You'll return to your desk when I am through with you. If you want to make up with me I'll let things slide. If you'll——"

"I want nothing to do with you outside of business, Mr. Peck," she said, with some spirit.

"Oh, you don't, eh? All right. I'll pickle you. I have reported Barron's conduct to me to my father, and just as soon as Gilligan gets back from Boston your gallant defender will be bounced. How does that strike you?" said Peck, Jr., with a grin of satisfaction.

"Do you mean to say that you intend to have Mr. Barron discharged for defending me against your insulting behavior?" cried Nellie indignantly.

"I certainly do. He acted in a brutal way toward me—upsetting me on my back—and I mean to get square with him."

"You're a mean, contemptible coward!" flashed the angry girl. "I shall interfere in his behalf

and tell your father, as well as Mr. Gilligan, how you acted to me and to him. You called him a scrub and a beggar, and raised your foot to kick him. He treated you as you deserved."

"You can interfere all you want to, Miss Summers. It won't do any good. Your lover will be fired Saturday."

"How dare you call him my lover?"

"Well, ain't he? He's stuck on you, and you're stuck on him, or you pretend to be to get him on your string. I wouldn't be surprised to see you drop him like a hot cake after he loses his job, for he'll have to hustle around to pay his board; then he won't have any money to treat you with," sneered Peck, Jr.

"You call yourself a gentleman!" cried the half-frantic girl. "To insult me in such a gross way. I have no words to express the utter contempt I feel toward you. But this is the last time you'll have the opportunity to treat me this way. I shall leave the office this instant. I wouldn't breathe the same air that you do for ten times the wages I get from the firm."

Throwing her note-book on the floor, Miss Summers left the office, put on her hat and went straight home, fully determined never to enter the office of Peck, Gilligan & Co. again.

Bob was in the little draughting-room near his desk, where on a long, flat shelf lay spread out the blue print drawings of a big job the firm was going to put a bid in for, when Nellie Summers left the office. This was no political plum that Mr. Peck, Sr., could work to his own advantage, but a contract that would go to the lowest responsible bidder. Peck, Gilligan & Co. were anxious to secure it because of the reputation it would give the contractor to tackle it. It was a job in which stone figured almost exclusively, and the specifications called for a certain kind of stone which was to be used in the construction. Gilligan had ascertained where this stone was to be got, what it cost, and the railway transportation charges to Wakefield, with other facts, and had furnished Bob with the data.

It was up to the young engineer to estimate on the quantity of the material required in the job, the quantity of stone blocks required for facing and other purposes—in fact, he had to figure on all the stuff needed as shown by the specifications. Then came the cost of labor and other items, in order to determine the price the firm could bid in order to realize a fair profit on the job. Bob had already submitted all the leading figures, and Gilligan's errand to Boston was to have these figures gone over by an experienced civil engineer in order to determine the correctness of the boy's work. The young engineer had worked hard on his estimates, both at home and at the office, for he knew this would be a real test of his efficiency.

A serious error was likely to cause his dismissal. If everything was all right, and the firm captured the contract, he would be the real boss of the job, and his purpose was to ask for more pay. His trouble with Peck, Jr., altered the outlook somewhat, for the possibility of losing his position hung over him at that moment. This was particularly hard after the labor he had put in over this job. If he was let go another engi-

neer would get all the credit if the firm did the work, and a fine opportunity would be lost to him. Bob had all the original facts and figures in his possession. These he had systematized and copied in detail for Gilligan to have verified.

He had copied all the items in a book to have them at hand to refer to some day when asked to figure on another job of a similar nature. This book he regarded as his private property and kept locked in his trunk. He had two other books full of useful data he had picked up at the technical school while studying, as well as many text books which he had found useful to consult while working on the present job—the first he had ever attempted. Bob was confident that his figures would be found correct, for he had shown remarkable aptitude for his profession while learning it, and had graduated first in a large class after a grueling examination.

The letter from the head of the technical school, the most important in Boston, had secured him employment with Peck, Gilligan & Co., and would have got him a job anywhere that his services were needed. As he still had that letter, there was no real fear that he would be long out of work if the firm he was with dispensed with him; but Bob didn't want to leave Westlake, chiefly on Miss Summers's account, and was willing to take less pay than he might get elsewhere, and put up with sundry annoyances, to stay there. Bob, as we have remarked, was in the draughting-room when the fair stenographer quit, and had no suspicion of what had taken place between the girl and Henry Peck, Jr. Bert, however, was in the outer office, and he had noticed the young lady's excited manner and precipitate exit. He felt that something was wrong, for he knew she had gone in the private room to take dictation from the junior partner. He guessed that Peck, Jr., had been making himself disagreeable to her again, and knowing that the girl was too spirited to be sat upon, he suspected that she had left to call on Peck, Sr., at his law office to enter a protest, or make a complaint against his son. He walked into the draughting room.

"I think Miss Summers has had a run-in with Peck, Jr.," he said to Bob.

The young engineer dropped the implement he was using.

"How do you know?" he said.

Bert told him what he had noticed.

"Miss Summers wouldn't leave the office at this time of day if something wasn't wrong," he added.

Bob agreed with him.

"Confound the fellow!" he said. "I suppose he brought up the trouble of the afternoon before yesterday, and said something she took offence at. It's a shame that a chap of his social standing can't act like a gentleman."

"Some people are not built on the lines that make a gentleman," said Bert, "no matter what their social or financial standing is."

"I've got something to tell you about Peck, Jr., and the friends he associates with—something that happened last night, of which I was the victim."

"Yes? What is it?" asked Bert, in a tone of interest.

"Not now. I'm busy, and you ought to be. When we go to lunch I'll tell you the facts. It

was rather a scaly trick. Peck's friends may have considered it simply as a lark, but I'm sure that Peck himself had a deeper design in sight. It was more good luck than anything else that enabled me to show up here as usual this morning. I imagine that Peck, Jr., was surprised to see me at my desk when he came here. I'll bet he has been wondering how I got out of my fix."

"You excite my curiosity, old man," said Bert. "He played some trick on you?"

"He did, and he used your name as a bait to catch me."

"He did."

"He did; but run along now. You shall learn all at noon."

Bob turned to his work and Bert returned to his.

The stenographer did not come back and when Bert and Bob went to lunch the former was told all that had happened to Bob the night before. Bert was simply astonished at it. Peck, Sr., showed up at four o'clock and asked for Miss Summers. Peck, Jr., told him he had had a scrap with the girl over Barron and she had left the office. The old man always sided with his son, so nothing more was said about the girl's leaving.

That evening Bert and Bob called at the Summers cottage and were made acquainted with all that took place in the office between Miss Summers and Peck, Jr. They remained until half-past nine and then left. Gilligan returned from Boston on Saturday noon. He was not pleased to learn of Miss Summers's leaving, and when Peck, Sr., informed him that they were going to drop Bob, Gilligan put up a decided kick. He stated that Bob's estimate had been upheld by the Boston expert, who said the boy was born to the business. Peck, Sr., however said that if Barron did not go that he and his son would withdraw from the firm. So Bob received a notice in his pay envelope that his services were no longer required. He told Bert, and then left the office.

CHAPTER VI.—Bob's Luck.

For two days Bob had been trying to open the japanned tin box without breaking the lock. He had cleaned the lock as well as he could and soaked it with oil, but the key wouldn't work. He had some thought of taking it to a locksmith, but as he had acquired a suspicion that the box might contain gold money, from its weight, he did not care to expose its contents to the eyes of an outsider. He would rather break the lock than do that. Most young fellows would have smashed the lock in the first place, but Bob was endowed with a large amount of patience, and chose to take his time in reaching the inside of the box. The fact was it was an old-fashioned box, not often seen these days outside a curio shop, and the boy didn't want to spoil its looks. After dinner Saturday night he went to his room to devote another spell of effort to it. He worked away with oil and a pick which he had borrowed from a locksmith, occasionally trying the key. At the end of an hour the key suddenly turned with a snap and he lifted the cover. The first thing that caught his eye was a folded Boston newspaper of

ancient look. The date was plain to be seen—January 11, 1858. Removing the paper, he found the box filled with what looked and felt like rolls of money. His heart beat fast at the sight. It beat faster when he broke one of them open and a stream of \$10 gold coins fell on the table.

"My gracious!" he ejaculated. "Here is money to burn. And it appears to be all mine by right of discovery. I must count it and see how much there is."

Each roll contained exactly \$500, and there were seventy rolls, making the amount of his find \$35,000. He was certainly rolling in luck. What did the loss of his position amount to now? He sat before his treasure trove and thought how much this meant to him. Was he dreaming over the splendid times that money would enable him to have? Not at all. He had already decided on banking the money for the future. What he was thinking about was Nelile Summers. She was of more importance to him than even his new riches. He was resolved to win her for his wife, and he believed the possession of this new-found capital would help him greatly. Not that he thought she was looking for money, but because he wanted to surround his heart's choice with every rational comfort—for love in a cottage was a bit out of date in the beginning of the twentieth century.

He couldn't stay in his room, so he walked out to dream in the open air, under the broad star-lit blue sky. Bob's steps took him toward the river on which Westlake was located. Not toward the water front of the town, but toward the suburbs. He had no special object in going to the river, but High street, on which he lived, ran in that direction one way, and merged itself into the old river road. As his stroll took that direction, naturally he went toward the river. His mind was largely occupied now by the \$35,000. He was thinking that if he could buy an interest in some responsible firm of contractors it might pay him better than leaving it in the bank at a small rate of interest. The bank would use his money and make a profit out of it. Why not make all he could himself out of the money? He walked out of High street into the road.

At that moment the full moon rose above the distant hills and lighted up the landscape. Its rays brought the flowing stream out of obscurity, and silvered its rapidly moving surface. The houses grew fewer and fewer as he walked on. He was leaving the lights of Westlake behind him. The road curved around to follow the course of the river. Suddenly he noticed that he had reached the property which had been purchased by the syndicate that proposed to dam the river at this point to secure water power to run the machinery of the new automobile factory the company, rated as a \$5,000,000 concern, was about to erect at this point. It was the bid for this dam that Bob had been working on since he came to Wakefield. Peck, Gilligan & Co. also intended putting in a bid for building the factory. Gilligan was attending to that, for he was a practical builder.

In the event of Peck, Gilligan & Co. securing the dam work, he had pictured his name in the local papers as the engineer in charge of the work, and its progress was certain to be noted from time to time in the press. Now that dream

was shattered, and it might be several years hence before he had anything to do with a job of similar importance. It was a lost opportunity that would always be a subject of regret to him. Oh, well, if Dame Fortune had played him a shabby trick in one respect, she had repaired the mischief liberally in another direction. Such were his thoughts as, deserting the river road, he walked up the hill that faced upon the river a short distance beyond the syndicate's property. This hill represented part of a small farm which had been in the market for a year or so, ever since the death of the owner.

It had now come in legal possession of the widow, and she was so anxious to get rid of it that she had reduced the price quite a bit. It was a bargain for any one that wanted a small farm, but just then small farms were a drug in the market, and not even a would-be buyer turned up to look at it. The moon rose higher in the sky, and the landscape, as far as the boy could see, lay spread out sleeping in the silvery beams. On the declivity facing the river road stood the farmhouse—an old-fashioned building of no great value. A light came dimly from one of the windows. Bob was now at the very top of the hill. Here was a big board sign announcing that the property was for sale, and anybody interested was invited to apply to the owner at the house on the declivity, or at the office of John Smith, attorney-at-law, No. 317 Washington street, Westlake.

"I guess I'll take the short cut across the fields instead of returning the way I came," thought Bob.

It must have been Dame Fortune, who still had him under her wing, that put that thought in his head at that moment, for had he retraced his route back to town this story, if it had been written at all, would have concerned only the career of a young civil engineer. Shakespeare wrote that there is a time in the affairs of all men which, if taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. When Bob set his face toward the fields he stepped into that flood. As he passed down the grassy slope of the hill he came to a stretch of bushes that in part hid a gully. Twice before he had passed through those bushes, but each time he had unconsciously avoided the gully. He thought he was taking the same course now, but the moonlight deceived his eyes, and he suddenly became aware that the ground was slipping away from under his feet. The next moment he fell into a deep hole, hit his head a glancing blow, and shot forward into the depths of the hill quite unconscious of where he was going.

CHAPTER VII.—The Queen of His Heart.

Several hours passed away before Bob regained his senses, but he had no idea of the flight of time. He supposed he had been dazed for a few moments. He was lying on his back, at an angle of 45 degrees, with his feet fortunately at the lowest point. He sat up and looked around him, only to find himself in the midst of an intense darkness. The moonlight and the brilliant sky had been blotted out as far as he was concerned

"Where in thunder have I got to?" he asked himself.

He was soon to realize that his feet were pressed against the lowest rung in the ladder of fortune, and that his lucky star pointed the way upward. After some difficulty he managed to find a spot where he could stand upright. Then he got out his match-safe and struck a light. As the glow illuminated the scene he saw that he was standing inside a kind of stone cave. Behind him was apparently the road out, for it was the rocky slope by which he had got there—a smooth incline, too precipitous in parts to ascend without aid from above.

It gradually broke on his mind, after trying to go up the incline and finding it impossible, that he was a prisoner some distance below the outside surface of the hill. It looked for the moment as if he was doomed to death by slow starvation, unless he could find means of making his predicament known. After the first shock Bob started to inspect the cave more carefully. Perhaps he might find some other exit from the place. He held a match close to the rock wall to see what kind of rock the cave was made of. He was very well acquainted with the composition of the different kinds of rocks, for he had studied the subject closely and was able to tell most any kind at a glance.

"Granite!" he ejaculated. "And the very kind wanted for ballasting the new dam. What a discovery! Judging from what I see around me I should say that the entire hill is composed of it. And to think that there are loads of it right on the spot! If Peck, Gilligan & Co. knew of this deposit they'd buy the farm as quick as a wink, and the reduction they could afford to make in their bid would insure them the contract over all competitors. All they'd have to do when they were ready to begin work on the dam would be to blast out the rock. The only expense they'd be at would be the labor and general cost of getting it out. They would stand to make a mighty good profit. Then this stone would make first rate stuff to build the foundation of the factory, when mixed with cement. That would enable them to shade their bid on the building and still garner a handsome profit. Heavens! This is a great find! First thing on Monday morning I shall get an option on this property, and when the name of the lucky bidder or bidders on the syndicate's work is announced in the papers, I'll be in a position to offer the rock for sale on the ground at a price that will make it an object for the successful contractors to deal with me. I'll earn the cost of the farm several times over, and still have rock to sell for road building and other purposes for some time to come."

In the exuberance of his spirits Bob forgot his peculiar position, and walked around examining his discovery. Everything tended to show that the hill was wholly formed of the rock in question, and not the faintest doubt existed in the boy's mind that he had tumbled upon a mighty good thing. This, taken in connection with the \$35,000 in gold in his trunk, demonstrated that his good fortune was in the ascendant. At one point in the cave the side was filled up with brush. Bob at first wondered at this, for such a thing he had never heard of growing under-

ground. He shoved his arm through it as far as it would go, but his hand met with no other obstruction than the brush itself.

"There must be an outlet here," he thought. "In no other way can I account for the presence of this stuff. As I have to get out of this cave somehow, I can't do better than investigate where this goes to."

Full of hope that he would be able to push his way to freedom, he began boring a passage for himself through the dry and brittle stuff. After going about three yards he suddenly came out into the gully at the foot of the hill. He felt like shouting over his escape. The star-lit heavens and the sheen of the moonlight was above his head. He soon picked his way clear of the gully and continued on toward his boarding-house, his mind whirling with the importance of his discovery, and what it meant to him.

"Why, I'll be rich before I am legally entitled to cast my first vote," he mused.

Suddenly a new train of thought struck him. Why could he not branch out as a contractor on his own account by putting in a bid for the new dam? He had all the facts and figures at hand with which to prepare such a bid. And he had the money to put up as a guarantee. All he had to do was to make a new estimate covering the ballasting rock, and he felt certain that his bid would be accepted, for he would be able to go lower than the close figures Peck, Gilligan & Co. intended to submit. Wouldn't it be a personal triumph for him to take the work away from the firm that had discharged him with such little ceremony? It surely would, and how it would tickle Nellie Summers, who had probably learned by this time that he had lost his position, and was grieving over it because she regarded herself as the innocent cause of his supposed trouble.

The new idea took complete control of Bob, and the more he thought over it the more determined he became to put it through. The first thing he must do was to buy the farm. Then the difficulty occurred to him that, being under age, he could not hold real estate in his own name. Oh, well, he could get somebody to take it over in trust for him. But who could he get to do that? He was a comparative stranger in that locality, and it would be necessary to secure somebody he could trust, for when the value of the farm as a rock-producing plant became known, the trustee might euchre him out of it in some way. Everybody was on the make these days.

More than one man told him that he wouldn't trust his own brother to do the right thing by him in the face of a serious temptation. Then it occurred to him that Mrs. Summers might act for him if he asked her to. He was sure he could trust Nellie's mother. He could get one of the courts to appoint her as his legal guardian, if that was necessary. That would be as fine as silk. With Mrs. Summers established as his guardian he thought his way to Nellie's heart would be open and probably sure. At any rate he would have her mother on his side, and as the girl already felt a grateful leaning toward him, he guessed the future could take care of itself. His thoughts became so pleasant that he hardly noticed the walk home. He was somewhat surprised to find the town so dark and silent. It must be

much later than he thought. For the first time he thought of looking at his watch. To his astonishment he saw that it was two in the morning.

"I must have been unconscious some time in that rave," he said to himself. "Well, it doesn't make much difference, I can sleep in the morning as long as I like. If breakfast is over when I get up there is a restaurant four blocks away where I can go."

Fifteen minutes later he was in bed, but it was some time before he got to sleep, for his mind was much exercised over the immediate future, which appeared to be lined with gold. After breakfast next morning Bert came over to see him.

"Do you think you'll leave town, Bob?" said his friend. "I'd hate to see you go, old man. I've never met a chap I liked as well as you."

"No, I am not going to leave town," answered Bob.

"What do you expect to do?"

"I expect to start in business for myself, and hire you as my chief assistant."

"Can you afford to do that?"

"I can. I can afford to do a good many things."

"Then you mean to hang out your shingle as a civil engineer?"

"No, as a contractor."

"You don't mean that?"

"I certainly do mean it."

"And how do you expect me to help you?"

"You'll find out in a few days. What wages are you getting now?"

"Seven dollars."

"I shall give you \$10 to start with."

"Ten dollars!" ejaculated Bert.

"Yes, and you are going to earn it."

"I'll try to if I work for you."

"I don't think you are in love with Peck, Gilligan & Co."

"Bet your life I ain't. And less since they discharged you."

"Very well. If I guarantee you a steady job you'll come with me?"

"As quick as a wink."

"Very good. I'll prove to you some time during the week that you'll be the gainer by making the change."

"Where did you go last night? I was around looking for you."

"I went out to take a walk to think things over."

"And now you've decided what you're going to do?"

"I have," replied Bob, in a tone of decision.

He said nothing to enlighten Bert about the two big slices of luck that had come his way, and they talked on different subjects till it was time for Bert to go home to his Sunday dinner. Bob's dinner was also ready, and after finishing it he went to his room and, dressing himself with care, started for the Summers cottage. Nellie admitted him and appeared to be greatly pleased at seeing him.

"Well, I've lost my job with the firm," he said, when they were seated in the little parlor.

"I am so sorry," said the girl, looking at him sympathizingly.

"I'm not," said Bob promptly. "Some great luck has come my way, and I have no further use for Peck, Gilligan & Co."

"I'm awfully glad to hear that," she said, with a happy smile, which, however, faded as she said: "Are you going to leave town?"

"Would you care much if I did?" he asked, taking her hand.

She turned away with heightened color.

"You don't answer," he said.

"I should be sorry to have you go," she said, with some effort.

He felt her hand tremble in his.

"Is it because you have learned to care for me a little?" he asked, putting his arm around her waist, which familiarity on his part she did not resent. "Is it because as a woman you have divined that I love you—with all my heart and every fiber of my nature—and are not displeased at my presumption? Nellie, do you care for me? You are silent. I have made a mistake then in supposing——"

He partly withdrew his arm.

"No—no—I—I——"

"Do you love me? Yes or no?"

He ventured to draw her toward him.

"Yes," she breathed, turning and hiding her face on his shoulder.

"You have made me very happy, dear."

He raised her head and kissed her, and that first kiss thrilled them both.

"I am not going to leave town, dear," he said.

"Oh, I am so happy!"

"Of course you are. By the way, are you going back to the office?"

"Never!" she cried, with energy. "Mr. Gilligan called last night, heard my story, and tried to persuade me to alter my resolve, but I wouldn't."

"I'm glad to hear it. I want you to work for me."

"Work for you?" she said, in some wonder.

"Yes. I am going into business. I want somebody to look after the office, attend to my book-keeping, and do such other things as will come up, including my correspondence. Will you accept the job at \$10 to start with?"

"Oh, Mr. Barron, can you afford to pay me \$10?"

"I thought you were my sweetheart?"

"I am," she said blushing.

"Then why call me Mr. Barron. Why not Bob?"

She hid her face again.

"Are you going to call me Bob?" he said.

"Bob," she said, looking up.

Then he kissed her again.

"Yes, I can afford to pay you \$10. I have practically hired Bert also, as my general assistant."

"You will do business as a civil engineer, of course?"

"No. As a contractor. Contractor Bob—how will that sound?"

"No; it wouldn't look dignified. I couldn't allow you to——"

"So you are asserting your authority over me already?" he laughed.

She smiled and blushed, and put her fingers across his mouth.

"It shall be Contractor Bob to you and Bert, but to the general public—Mr. Robert Barron,

C. E., General Contractor and Builder. How will that suit the queen of my heart?"

She smiled, gave him a tender glance and looked very happy.

CHAPTER VIII.—Getting Ready for Business.

Bob stayed to tea at the Summers cottage, and after the meal was over he and Nellie adjourned to the porch. Half an hour later Mrs. Summers, as yet unaware of the tender tie which now bound her daughter and the young visitor, joined them there.

"Mrs. Summers, I have a special favor to ask of you," said Bob.

Nellie gave a little gasp and looked confused, for she thought her young lover was about to ask her mother for her. She had expected to break the news to her mother herself first.

"If I can oblige you in any way, Mr. Barron, you may command me. I appreciate what you have done for my daughter, and as I have learned you have lost your position in consequence of your manly action, I shall be only too glad to do anything for you that lies in my power," said Mrs. Summers.

"The service I am going to ask of you is one of trust, and I expect I shall astonish you somewhat," said Bob.

Nellie looked puzzled and glanced curiously at the boy.

"Circumstances have so shaped themselves, Mrs. Summers, that it may be necessary for me to have a legal guardian, and I want you to qualify as such."

Nellie fairly gasped with astonishment, while her mother looked her surprise.

"May I ask why it is necessary for you to have a guardian?" said the lady.

"I am going to buy a piece of property. As I am but nineteen I cannot legally obtain title to it. I wish you to take title for me and hold it as a trust for me until I am of age."

"I will gladly do that for you; but is it necessary that I should become your guardian to do it?"

"Perhaps not, but I thought it would be more regular. However, I will first consult a lawyer on the subject."

He then told Mrs. Summers about his business project, but did not say anything more on the subject that he had already told his sweetheart. He did not believe in telling any of his plans until matters were more definitely arranged. When things had shaped themselves he intended to take Nellie and her mother into his confidence, and, to some extent, Bert. Mrs. Summers was surprised when he told her he had offered her daughter \$10 a week to work for him, and she had accepted, and that he had also arranged to employ his friend Bert, too. After Mrs. Summers retired from the porch, Bob and Nellie enjoyed a blissful little tete-a-tete all to themselves, in which many soft nothings were spoken under the sheen of the silvery moon. Some kisses were exchanged, as a matter of course, and finally Bob departed. It is to be supposed that both of the young people had very pleasant dreams that night, for both were very happy. Bob was up bright and early next

morning. Directly after breakfast he started for the Wheatley farm. On arriving at the little old-fashioned farmhouse he found the widow in the yard with a sunbonnet on, drawing a pail of water from the well, which was operated by a handle and a crank.

"Am I addressing Mrs. Wheatley?" asked Bob, politely raising his hat.

"Yes," she replied, wondering who her visitor was, and what he wanted.

"I noticed that this property is for sale."

"It is."

"I should like to buy it if I can get it for a reasonable price."

"You would?" she said, with the accent on the you; "why, you don't look as if you were a farmer."

"I'm not, ma'am. As a matter of fact, I am acting for a Mrs. Summers. What do you want for this place?"

"I think it is worth \$5,000; but as I'm anxious to move away, now that my husband is dead, and I can't work it satisfactorily, nor do I care to do it longer, I will take \$4,000."

"If you will accept \$3,500 I will close with you," said Bob, more to make a bluff than because he objected to the widow's figure.

"No. I won't sell less than \$4,000. It is a bargain at that."

Privately Bob agreed with her—it was a bargain for the purpose he had in view, but whether it would pay to give \$4,000 for it simply as a farm he could not say. After some talk Bob consented to pay \$4,000, and offered the widow ten per cent. of the purchase price to close the sale. She accepted the money and gave him the proper receipt.

"To save you a trip to town this morning, if you will write a note to your lawyer telling him that you have sold this property for \$4,000 to Mrs. Summers, in trust for Robert Barron, I will deliver it and he can prepare the contract. You can then come in, say to-morrow morning at eleven, and sign the papers, and I will have Mrs. Summers at your lawyer's office to sign also. State in your note that you have received \$400 on account," said Bob.

Mrs. Wheatley wrote the note and Bob took it away with him. He called on Mr. Smith and presented it. The lawyer promised to have the contract drawn in duplicate by next day at eleven, and Bob left. The next thing the young engineer did was to get a large money-bag. Into this he dumped \$30,000 in rolls, took the money to the Westlake National Bank and exchanged it for a certificate of deposit for that sum. That left \$4,600 in gold in his possession in his trunk. As he was coming out of the bank he met Peck, Jr.

"Hello, Barron. Have you been depositing your surplus capital?" grinned the junior partner.

"How did you guess it?" replied Bob.

"Oh, I'm a good guesser. Maybe you were looking for the job of porter in the bank. If you need reference come around to the office and I'll write you one."

"That is very kind of you, indeed, Mr. Peck. If I wanted to get thrown out of a place all I'd have to do would be to present a reference signed by you."

"You're funny, you are," sneered the young man.

"Not half as funny as you thought you were when you kidnaped me from my boarding-house, with the help of five companions, carried me to the old mill in your father's car, and initiated me into the Order of the Fum Fozzles."

"Who said I had anything to do with that?"

"Your voice said so. Anyway I caught sight of your face in the light of the lantern as you were leaving the cellar with your friends."

"How could you when you were blindfolded?"

"If you were not implicated in the affair, how did you know I was blindfolded?"

Peck, Jr., saw that he had given himself away.

"How did you like it, anyway?" he grinned.

"Not as much as you did, probably."

"How did you manage to get away?"

"You chaps tied me to a rotten post. I pulled it down, and the rest was easy. After walking a mile or so I was overtaken by a doctor returning in his buggy. He carried me back to town. He also removed the mural decorations you put on my face, so on the whole I only suffered the loss of a couple of hours' sleep."

"Humph! Are you going to quit town?"

"Not that you could notice it."

"There is no other contracting firm here that needs your services."

"They couldn't get me if they did," and Bob passed on.

Next morning he was on hand with Mrs. Summers at Lawyer Smith's office. They found Mrs. Wheatley there. The contracts were examined and signed by the two ladies, Bob's representative having thirty days in which to have the titles examined and complete the purchase if everything was all right. The Boston Title and Trust Co. had an agent in Westlake, and Bob and Nellie's mother called on him. An agreement was entered into by the company's agent with Mrs. Summers by which the company was to search the title and guarantee it for the purchase price if it was found all right. Then Bob and the lady called on a lawyer and consulted him as to the guardianship matter.

"If you feel that you can put full confidence in this lady it isn't necessary for her to become your guardian in order to hold property for you. If this lady was appointed your guardian she would acquire the rights of a parent over you, and all your actions would be subject to her pleasure. As your guardian she would be responsible to the court who appointed her. As your trustee she would be responsible only to yourself."

"Very well, we'll drop the guardianship business, and I'll let her act as my trustee in all real-estate transactions I may engage in until I become twenty-one," said Bob. "I am willing to take all chances on her doing the right thing by me."

So that matter was settled. The next thing Bob tackled was the estimate to submit to the action of the board of managers of the syndicate. Before beginning on it he wanted to know what it would cost him to blast the rock out of the hillside. He went to the superintendent of a large quarry seventy miles away and got all the facts he wanted to know. He found two small connecting rooms in an office building on the third floor

on Washington street, the principal business thoroughfare of Westlake, and furnished them up to suit his needs. When all was complete he told his sweetheart to come to work.

"Is this my place?" she asked, after she had inspected the rooms and approved of their business-like look, placing her hand on the desk outside the private door.

"Yes. Looks rather bare at present, doesn't it? But you mustn't mind that. Business hasn't opened up yet. You won't have much to do for a while except to keep office hours and draw your pay. You can fetch a book with you and put in the time reading."

"Do I begin to-day?"

"Yes. This is Thursday, and you can let me off with half a week's wages. I will have a typewriter sent in some time to-day, and then you can help me prepare my bid for the construction of the dam on the river—the same work I figured on for Peck, Gilligan & Co."

"You don't mean to say you are going to bid on that work?" cried the girl in surprise.

"Why not?"

"Why, it's a big job, and a certified check for \$25,000 must accompany it as a guarantee of good faith."

"Suppose it is a big job. If I had remained with P., G. & Co., and the firm won the contract, it was understood I was to have supervision of the work."

"I know. I don't doubt your ability to put the work through all right. But where are you going to get the money to finance it? Mr. Peck will furnish all the money needed if the firm gets the contract."

"P., G. & Co. will not get the contract. I can tell you that right now."

"How do you know they won't?"

"Because my bid will be lower than theirs. I know pretty near the amount they are going to put in. I can afford to bid lower and still make a bigger profit than they anticipate getting out of the work. In fact, though my statement will astonish you, I can do the work cheaper than any other contractor in the business."

"How can you?" replied Nellie incredulously.

"Because I have the rock required to ballast the dam right on the spot."

"You have?" cried the girl in some amazement.

"Yes. Any other successful bidder would have to bring it at least 100 miles by rail, and that would cost money, for several thousand tons of it will be required. Then any other contractor would have to haul it from the cars, and the freight sheds are over a mile from the site of the work. I will merely have to dig the stone out and haul it in carts a few hundred yards."

"Really, I don't understand you, Bob. You say you have the stone on the spot, and then you say you have to dig it out. You mean out of the ground, I suppose?"

"Out of the side of a hill. I won't keep you in the dark any longer. The kind of granite required by the dam specifications is to be found on the property your mother will shortly take title to in my interest. That's how I came to buy that farm."

"Oh!" ejaculated Nellie.

"Even if I failed to get the work, which I don't expect, I could still make a good thing by selling that rock to the successful contractor—see?"

"Yes; but if the right kind of stone is on that place, why didn't Peck, Gilligan & Co. buy the farm weeks ago when they decided to bid on the work?"

"Because they don't know the stone is there. It isn't in sight."

"How did you learn it was there?"

"By accident, and a curious accident it was. Listen and I will tell you."

Bob then, for the first time, told his sweetheart of his adventure in the gully.

"And you never told me about that before?" she said, with a pout. "Aren't you mean?"

"Do you want to know all my business secrets before we are married?"

"Of course not," she answered, with a blush; "but that was an adventure."

"True, but it became a business secret the moment I learned what a good thing I had struck. However, I have taken you into my confidence now, so you ought to be satisfied. You are the only one besides myself who is aware of the presence of that stone in this neighborhood."

"Then you really intend bidding for the work?"

"Yes."

"But the \$25,000 deposit, dear, not to speak of the money you will need to start the work if you win the contract?"

"I have it in the Westlake National Bank, in the shape of a certificate of deposit good for \$30,000. And this is independent of the \$3,600 I have to give your mother to pay for the farm when she takes title to it."

Perhaps Nellie wasn't struck dumb with surprise.

CHAPTER IX.—Wreck and Rescue.

"Why, Robert, I didn't know you were worth money. This is a great surprise to me. I thought——"

"That I was dependent on my wages? Well, so I was until the other day."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I see I shall have to tell you my other business secret. Well, if I can't trust my own sweetheart I don't know who I can trust."

Then Bob told her about his adventure at the mill, and how it resulted in putting \$35,000 in gold into his pocket.

"My gracious! What a fortunate boy you are!"

"Sure I am. I'm just rolling in good luck. The best piece of good fortune, however, was the winning of your heart. That's worth more to me than all the rest put together."

"Do you really think so, you dear boy?" said Nellie, putting her hands on his two shoulders.

"Do you really think I am so valuable?"

"Can you doubt my sentiments toward you, sweetheart?"

"Not for an instant," she said, and with the lovelight shining in her eyes she rose on her tiptoes and kissed him.

"Now let's get down to business, girlie. Come into my room and we'll go over my bid together.

It's got to be in the hands of the secretary of the Board of Managers of the syndicate on or before the last day of this month. I dare say most of the bids are in by this time. P., G. & Co.'s and mine will probably be the last ones. The lowest responsible bidder will win. The only thing that bothers me is whether the syndicate will consider me responsible enough to do business with. If P., G. & Co.'s bid is the second lowest, and I win, the firm is sure to make a stiff protest against my getting the work. They are likely to claim that I am irresponsible, and that I haven't the resources necessary to put the work through even without reference to the time limit. I fear I will have something of a fight on my hands to save my bid, if it proves successful, from being thrown out," said Bob as they walked into the private room.

The young engineer went over every item of his bid carefully, and Nellie made notes for him from time to time. Finally he was satisfied it was ready for the girl to make the first typewritten copy from. Then he went out and purchased a typewriter, ordering it delivered at his office at once. As soon as it arrived Nellie got busy. When Bob returned to the building after his lunch he saw that his name had been inserted in the directory of the tenants. While looking at it he discovered, for the first time, that Henry Peck, Sr., had his law offices on the second floor.

"If he notices my name among the tenants he'll be surprised, I'll bet," said the boy to himself.

There was little fear that Peck, Sr., would notice it, as he never looked at the directory. When he reached his office Nellie handed him the first draft of his bid to look over, and then she went to her lunch. Soon after she got back he returned it to her with such alterations as he thought best to make, and she made a second copy. That afternoon his printed cards, envelopes, letter heads, and other stationery was delivered. The painter also came around and put the following on his door:

ROBERT BARRON. Contractor and Builder.
Office Hours, 9 to 5.

About quarter of five, as Nellie was putting on her hat to go home, the door opened and Bert Baker walked in.

"Hello, Miss Summers. On the job already?" he said.

"Oh, yes," she smiled.

"This is a fine little office all right. Where is Bob?"

"In his private office."

Bob heard his voice and came out.

"How do you like the place, Bert?" he asked.

"First rate. I thought I'd call around and take it in. When shall you need my valuable services?"

"Not for a little while yet. I'll let you know in time to give P., G. & Co. the usual notice."

"All right. Fox, the surveyor, will be sorry to lose me, but I don't believe that Peck, Jr., or his father will worry much over my withdrawal. They can easily fill my shoes."

At that moment they saw the shadow of some one outside the door. The door opened, and Peck, Jr., appeared.

"Well, if you haven't a nerve to set yourself up

as a contractor and builder," he said to Bob, ignoring Bert and the young lady.

"Nerve is one of my strong points, as you will probably learn later on," said Bob. "What can I do for you?"

"Nothing. I happened to see your name on the directory downstairs, and I came up to see if it was really you. What do you mean by advertising yourself as a contractor and builder? What do you know about contracting or building? You're just a graduate civil engineer, with a whole lot to learn yet."

"As you have no business with me, and I am about to close the office, I'll have to ask you to take your leave."

"I was going anyway. I'll come around in a month and see if you're still in business. I don't think you'll last much longer than thirty days."

With those words, Peck, Jr., went away.

On the following day Nellie prepared the final copy of the bid on the Snake River dam. Bob turned in his \$30,000 certificate of deposit and received another for \$25,000 and \$5,000 cash. He locked the money up in his safe with his \$4,000 odd balance, endorsed the new certificate payable to the order of the American Motor Car Co., inclosed it with his bid in the envelope, and going around to the post-office, mailed it through the registry department. Five days later, the time limit within which contractors looking for the two big jobs had to get their bids in would expire, the bids submitted would be opened and acted upon by the Board of Managers of the synicate, and the award made. The result would be announced in the Boston papers, and would naturally be copied by the Westlake papers, as the work to be done was of great local importance. Next day was Saturday, and Bob went out again to the farm, not so much to go over the property, which he wasn't interested in from a surface standpoint, as to look over the spot where the big dam was to be built. He intended to buy his own carts and the horses to draw them, since he could easily keep the outfit on the farm, where the animals could find lots of grass to eat in addition to their regular food, and a pasture to run in on Sundays. Then he could let the grass grow on the rest of the farm, and when the time came he could have it cut, pile it up in the sun, and thus reap a crop of hay. Or he could probably rent out the largest part of the farm on shares, and make a profit that way, though he hardly thought he would do that. The man who looked after his horses could act as a watchman at night at the stone quarry when it was opened up. He would likely be a married man, and he and his family could occupy the farmhouse and board an assistant. Bob considered all these points that afternoon as he strolled around what he expected to be the scene of his activities in the near future. Next day Bob hired a sailboat on the water front and, taking Bert, who was a good boatman, with him, sailed up the river to gather a few new facts, if he could, concerning the scene of the dam. The depth of the water, the force of the current, and other important particulars, had long since been obtained by him while working in the interests of Peck, Gilligan & Co. There seemed to be nothing in sight to be gleaned from the present sail. However, it would afford recreation for himself and

his friend. They sailed all over the ground, and finally headed up the river. On the opposite shore a colony of wealthy visitors who owned cottages there were beginning to arrive for the season. Two or three families had come during the preceding week, and the others were expected to appear at intervals up to the Fourth of July, when all might be looked for to be in their houses. A gentleman, a prominent Boston banker, named Frederick Mason, was one of the early birds with his family and servants. He owned a sailboat and delighted to go out on the river. This Sunday morning he started out in his boat with his two little girls, twins, of seven years, for a sail. Bob and Bert were on their way up the river against the tide, propelled by a lively breeze, when they saw Mason's craft ahead as they rounded one of the curves in the stream. Suddenly the Mason boat hit the end of a heavy submerged log and went over on its side, dumping the gentleman and his two children overboard. Mason was just able to catch one of the girls as he clung to the side of the capsized boat, but the other was whisked away by the current and borne down the river at a rapid rate. The boys saw the accident and noted the shrieking little one as she came up the first time, some distance from the boat.

"Head for her, Bert. We must save her," cried Bob.

Bert obeyed, and Bob seized the boat-hook and went forward. As he wasn't at all certain of getting the child with the hook, owing to the swiftness of the stream, he peeled off his hat, coat and shoes, ready to dive in after her, for he was a fine swimmer. The child went down the second time, and when she came up all she was able to do was to beat the water feebly with her little hands. Their boat was in a bad position to get her, and time was precious if the little one was to be rescued. So Bob made up his mind to go after her, and he did. The moment he hit the water he was swept off down the stream, but fortunately the little girl, now unconscious, and sinking for the last time, was borne within his reach and he seized her. Bert brought the sailboat around and she came shooting after the young contractor like a sea gull sweeping the surface of the sea. Although she had the wind against her, she had the advantage of the tide, and so rapidly overhauled the swimming boy. Bert threw a rope to his friend, who caught it with his disengaged hand, and was hauled close to the boat's side.

"Here, take the child," said Bob, and Bert quickly lifted her on board.

Then he gave Bob a hand, and that lad soon scrambled into the boat. The craft's head was swung around and she was headed for the capsized boat, to which the banker was clinging desperately while he sustained his other little daughter. His heart was torn with grief at what he believed to be the loss of the other twin. The tide brought the wreck down to the advancing sailboat, and Bob, with a rope around his waist, jumped overboard as they closed with the craft and relieved the banker of his precious burden. He passed her up to Bert, and then he assisted Mr. Mason to get aboard, too. The banker was quite exhausted, and with a cry he sank down beside the little one the boys had saved. Bert put for

the shore, leaving the other boat to shift for herself. He put in for the nearest of the private wharves, and it proved to be on the banker's property. Securing the boat, the boys took a twin each in their arms, and, followed by the father, who was nearly all in, walked to the Mason cottage, where the appearance of the party created consternation and some confusion. The little girls were taken in hand at once and brought around. Mr. Mason went to his room to change his clothes, and took Bob with him. He loaned the lad a complete change of his own clothes, and while Bob was putting it on he told the banker how the twin was saved. The banker felt deeply grateful to the boys, particularly to Bob, and he expressed his sentiments in no uncertain terms. The boys remained to dinner, at Mr. Mason's urgent invitation, and after the meal Bob resumed his own garments, which had been dried and pressed out for him in the laundry. When they said that they must go, Mr. Mason made them promise that they would call over and visit him and his family during the summer, which they promised to do.

"If I can be of service to either of you, don't fail to call on me," said the banker, "for you have placed me under the deepest of obligations."

"All right, sir," said Bob, "but I hardly think we'll stand in need of any favor. In the event that we should, we'll remember your offer."

Then they put off in their boat and returned home.

CHAPTER X.—Fighting for a Big Job.

Monday morning's mail brought a letter to Bob, the first business communication he had received since he opened his office. It bore the imprint of the American Motor Car Co., No. — Devonshire street, Boston, Mass. Bob opened it with a beating heart, for he knew it referred to his bid for the construction of the dam. It was a concise, formal note, requesting his presence at the company's office at noon on Wednesday, when the bids would be opened in the presence of the Board of Managers and all the contractors interested. Bob showed it to Nellie.

"You are going, of course?" she said.

"Like a bird," he replied.

"Mr. Gilligan will probably be there, and he will be much surprised to see you."

"He'll be more surprised when my bid is read out," laughed the young contractor.

When he was returning from his lunch he met Banker Mason on the street and invited him to his office. Mason went with him, and during his stay Bob told him about his bid for the dam that was to be built for the American Motor Car Co.

"I expect to win the contract," said Bob, "but I fear the question of my responsibility will be raised by the next highest bidder, and that the syndicate might in consequence entertain doubts as to my financial ability to put the work through. I am ready to put up a fight, because I have complied with the terms of the syndicate's advertisement, and have gone to a great deal of trouble to prepare my bid. As to my ability as an engineer there can scarcely be any doubt, though I have not yet had any practical experience. My deposit of \$25,000 should be taken as evidence that I mean

business, and beyond that nobody has a right to inquire into my financial status, because if, after signing the contract, I fail to comply with its terms my deposit will be forfeited."

"From your statement I should imagine you were able to finance the work, for if you were not you would hardly risk your deposit," said the banker; "but should you need any more funds to push the work, call upon me, and I will advance you any reasonable sum you may require without interest or security other than your personal note for whatever length of time you might need the money."

"Thank you, sir, for your generous offer. I may have to avail myself of it. There is one favor I would ask you to grant me."

"Name it, and, if it be possible, I will comply with your request."

"Permit me to refer to you, if the question of my responsibility should be raised."

"Willingly. There is my business card. Use my name in any way that is likely to be of service to you."

"With that assurance I think I shall win out. I have little fear concerning my bid, for I hold a trump card that should sweep the deck. What that trump card is I will inform you as soon as matters are settled."

Mr. Mason looked at his watch and said he must go.

On Wednesday morning Bob took a train for Boston. He reached the city at eleven, and at ten minutes of twelve he walked into the board room of the American Motor Car Co., which was connected with the business offices. He found a dozen men of substantial appearance present, all contractors who had submitted bids. Peck, Gilligan & Co. did not appear to be represented. The secretary of the syndicate was present at the foot of a long table covered with green baize cloth. During the next few minutes the members of the Board of Managers came in and seated themselves at the table. As the hand of the clock was on the stroke of noon, Mr. Gilligan was announced. He took a vacant chair without noting Bob's presence. All having arrived, a uniformed office boy closed the door and seated himself outside to bar anybody else who might want to go in.

"We will now proceed with the business before the Board—namely, the consideration of the bids submitted for the construction of the dam and those for the erection of the company's shops," said the chairman. "We have invited you here, gentlemen, that you may be certain that the business is perfectly fair and aboveboard. You are entitled to this consideration in view of the trouble and expense you have been put to in preparing your bids. Now, Mr. Black, begin."

The secretary unlocked a stout tin box which stood before him and took out a long envelope. He cut it open and pulled out the bid and a certified check for \$25,000. After glancing over the typewritten sheets, the secretary announced that Grant & Mugford bid \$550,000 for the dam and \$240,000 for the shops. The chairman made a note of the name of the firm and their bids on a sheet of paper before him. Five more bids, three for the dam and the other two for the shops alone, were read off and notice noted. With a single exception they were more or less higher than

Grant & Mugford. The exception was a Providence contractor named Wilson, who offered to build the shops for \$229,000. Then Bob's envelope was opened and the enclosure dumped out. When the secretary saw that the deposit was in the shape of a certificate of deposit instead of a certified check, he passed it to the chairman, who looked it over, and observing that it was indorsed payable to the American Motor Car Co., returned it with an "All right."

"Robert Barron, civil engineer, general contractor and builder, of Westlake, bids \$499,999 for the dam," read the secretary.

"What's that?" ejaculated Mr. Gilligan, springing to his feet. "Read that again, please."

The secretary did so.

"That's ridiculous!" said Gilligan. "Robert Barron is only a graduate civil engineer with no experience except the few weeks he spent in our office, from which he was discharged three weeks ago. He knows no more about the contracting and building business than a clam. His bid shows that he is incompetent, for that dam cannot possibly be constructed according to the plans and specifications for the amount he offers to do it for. He must be crazy to put a bid in for such an extensive job as that involved in the Snake River dam. Why, he hasn't any capital——"

"Your remarks are entirely out of order, Mr. ——."

"My name is Gilligan, of Peck, Gilligan & Co., Westlake."

"Kindly resume your seat, Mr. Gilligan. You are interrupting the business of the Board," went on the chairman. "Mr. Barron's bid is accompanied with the requisite deposit of \$25,000, and must be considered on the same footing as the other bids."

Gilligan sat down, but he was clearly greatly worked up. Two more bids, both for the shops alone, were read out. One wanted \$300,000 even, and the other \$274,499.

"Peck, Gilligan & Co., contractors and buliders, of Westlake, bids \$235,000 for the shops and \$539,500 for the dam," read the secretary.

"Gentlemen, it appears that the lowest bid for the dam is that put in by Robert Barron, of Westlake; and the lowest bid for the shops is that submitted by George Wilson, of Providence. It, therefore, becomes our duty to consider the acceptance of those bids. With the exception of the said Barron and Wilson, the other contractors will be excused from further attendance. When the award is finally made the bids and certified checks of the unsuccessful contractors will be returned to them."

This was the signal for Gilligan to continue his protest.

"I object to Barron's bid being considered as a responsible one. It is not. Barron is nothing but a boy, and he couldn't possibly carry out the work even if his bid was large enough to cover the ground. The understanding in cases of this kind is that the lowest responsible bid wins. The bid of Peck, Gilligan & Co. is the lowest responsible one. The firm is not only thoroughly responsible, and has executed many good sized jobs for the county of which Westlake is the seat, but Mr. Peck is a prominent lawyer and a large capitalist, and his private wealth is at all times at the service

of the firm. As the maaging partner and practical man of the firm, I demand that Barron's bid be thrown out and the bid of Peck, Gilligan & Co. considered in its place."

As Gilligan concluded, Bob jumped up.

"I think you have an awful nerve to make the statement you have just done," he said. "What do you know about my financial resources? Can you go into court, put your hand on the Bible and swear that of your own knowledge and belief that I am not worth the money necessary for carrying on the work of the Snake River dam according to the plans and specifications on which the bids are based?"

"Don't talk nonsense!" roared the contractor. "If you were worth a hundredth part of the amount of your bid you wouldn't have worked in our office for \$15 a week."

"Is that so, Mr. Milligan? I might have worked in your office or any other contractor's office for \$1 a week and still be worth a million dollars in my own right. I went to your office for experience—to fit myself to open up on my own account."

"You gained a lot of experience, didn't you, in six weeks?" sneered Gilligan.

"I gained all I needed to enable me to construct the Snake River dam. Now, look here, Mr. Gilligan, you have practically charged me before these gentlemen with incompetency, as well as lack of financial responsibility, and I'm going to make you take your words back. I can bring two members of your office force to prove that you said to Mr. Peck, in their presence, that you considered that the firm had secured a first-class engineer in me, and that all I lacked was actual experience to make me the equal of the best. Do you deny that you made that statement?"

Gilligan hesitated before replying.

"I'll admit that you are a good graduate engineer, and that in time you are likely to turn out a capable one, but at present you are not capable of carrying on a job like the dam," he said.

"If you say I am not, in your opinion, capable of carrying on the supervision of the Snake River dam, will you kindly explain why it was understood that in the event of Peck, Gilligan & Co. winning the contract for the dam, I was to have sole charge of the work?"

"You were to have charge of it under me," said Gilligan.

"Very good. Will you state before these gentlemen if you consider yourself capable of supervising the work of dam building? Have you any knowledge at all of the principles of the work? In what way do you consider yourself capable of advising a practical civil engineer? Have you any knowledge at all of civil engineering?"

"I don't propose to be catechised by you," snorted Gilligan.

"Will you tell these gentlemen who prepared the bid for the dam submitted by Peck, Gilligan & Co.?"

"You did the larger part of it while in our employ."

"And you took my figures with you to this city and submitted them to an expert, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And what was his opinion on them as a whole?"

"I decline to state. It is none of your business."

"I leave it to these gentlemen if your reply cannot be construed as favorable to me, for if the expert had demonstrated that my figures were wrong in any important particular, you would be glad to use that to show me up."

"Gentlemen," said Gilligan, turning to the Board, "I wish to add to my protest against giving the contract to this young man. The bid we have submitted was the result of this boy's work while in our employ. He was hired for that purpose, as only one well grounded in civil engineering could perform it. My instructions to him was to shave the figures, as we were anxious to get the job even on a small profit. That he did so is shown by the fact that our bid is \$10,500 lower than the next higher one. Now, gentlemen, with the knowledge of the approximate sum we were going to bid, this young man, after quitting our employ, goes to work and puts in a bid on his own account at a figure that he knew would be lower than ours. I ask you is this a square thing for him to do under the circumstances? I ask you is it honorable? Will you accept his bid under these circumstances?"

"Mr. Gilligan, will you state here why I quit your employ?" said Bob.

"You were discharged."

"For what reason? Because I was considered incompetent to perform the duties for which I was engaged?"

"No; because you insulted and struck the junior partner of the firm."

"My dismissal was insisted upon by Mr. Peck, Sr., wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Were you in favor of it?"

"I decline to say whether I was or not."

"Gentlemen," said Bob, "the fact that I was in possession of the approximate figure that Peck, Gilligan & Co were going to submit has really no bearing on the matter. When I quit the employ of the firm I had not the slightest idea of bidding against them on the dam. But I changed my mind within twenty-four hours. What caused me to do so? An astonishing discovery that I made. I discovered that the very stone named in the specifications for ballasting the dam was to be obtained in unlimited quantity right on the spot, or to be exact, within a few hundred yards of the site of the dam."

Bob's statement caused a sensation among all the contractors, for they had remained to see the issue of the squabble between Gilligan and the young civil engineer and contractor; but none were more staggered than Gilligan himself.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "There is no granite rock along the river."

"Isn't there?" answered Bob. "What will you bet on it?"

"Put up your money. Here is my \$1,000," and Bob flashed out a roll of bills as large as a house. "Mr. Secretary, will you hold the stakes?" and he handed that gentleman the money.

"I can't cover it. Do you think I carry \$1,000 around loose with me?" said Gilligan.

"Write out a promissory note, at three days sight, for one thousand dollars, payable to me if I win, and I'll put the \$1,000 against it. I guess you're good for the money."

"You're only making a bluff."

"That roll of bills don't look like a bluff. Mr. Secretary, if Mr. Gilligan covers my bet I'll pay all the expenses of yourself and a geological expert making the trip to Westlake any time within three days from this date to meet Mr. Gilligan and myself. I will then take you three to the spot where the rock is, and if, after making an examination of the stone the expert does not declare it to be the rock called for by the dam specifications, I authorize you to hand Mr. Gilligan back his note and with it my \$1,000 in cash. I think that is fair enough," said Bob.

"You don't mean it?" gasped Gilligan.

"I do, and—I have bought the property the stone is on," said Bob triumphantly.

CHAPTER XI.—Conclusion.

"Now, gentlemen, you can understand why I was in a position to put in a bid for the construction of the dam at a considerable lower rate than even Peck, Gilligan & Co., whose figure, I knew, was shaded to the lowest point compatible with a fair profit on so important a piece of work. I have the stone on the spot, and all I have to do is to employ men to dig it out. I can do this cheaper than it would cost me to buy the stone at the nearest point to Westlake that it is obtainable. Then I will save the entire cost of transportation by rail, and from the freight yards to the river. I think the advantage is so marked that no other contractor can beat me out and make a dollar on the job. Is my point well taken, gentlemen?"

All admitted it was, though all did not say so.

"There still remains the question of my responsibility to be settled, for Mr. Gilligan, representing the next highest bid on the dam, has called it in question. He has protested against my bid being accepted, Mr. Chairman, and has given his grounds. I admit that he has the right to protest if he believes he is in the right. You, gentlemen, who are responsible to your company for the awarding of the two bids, are justified in demanding that the successful bidders shall give you reasonable assurance that they can put the work through according to the plans and specifications within the time limit set by you for the completion of the jobs. Speaking now only for myself, I beg to offer you—first, this letter from the head of the Boston Technical Institute from which I graduated as some evidence of my ability as a civil engineer, and you are at liberty to call on that gentleman personally, give him an idea of the nature of the work I have bid for, and ask him if, in his opinion, he thinks it safe to trust me with the job; secondly, I refer you to my deposit of \$25,000 as evidence that I have some capital; third, I call your attention to the fact that I have the granite ballast rock on the ground ready to be blasted out, which fact not only accounts for the lowness of my bid, but prevents the job from being held up at any stage of the work owing to failure of the railroad company to deliver the rock at all times on time—a contingency which contractors must always consider, owing to shortage of suitable cars for transporting the rock, and other reasons which persons dependent on the rail-

road service are frequently up against, and lastly, I refer you to Mr. Frederick Mason, banker, of No. — State street, as to my financial responsibility. That is all, Mr. Chairman. On the above four grounds I insist that the contract for the dam be awarded to me. If you have any questions to ask me bearing on the subject, I am ready to answer them."

"Mr. Gilligan," said the chairman, "you have heard the grounds on which Mr. Barron stands upon his rights as the lowest bidder. Do you still insist that the Board consider your protest?"

"I do. I insist that the Board investigate Barron's financial standing, and if it is not good enough to stand for the job, that his bid be thrown out, his deposit returned, and the contract awarded to my firm," said Gilligan.

"Very well, Mr. Gilligan, we will, in our own interest, investigate the financial status of Robert Barron," said the chairman. "Have you anything further to say?"

"No, except this, that I am willing to take back any statement I have made against Barron if you find, on investigation, I am wrong."

Mr. Gilligan bowed himself out, and then the chairman told Bob that the Board would investigate his responsibility with reference to the dam contract, and if they felt a reasonable assurance that it would be safe in his hands they would notify him when to come to Boston to attend on the signing of the papers. When Bob left the Board room of the syndicate he went to lunch. Then he called at Mr. Mason's bank to see that gentleman, who had come to town. The banker was at his desk and gave him a warm welcome. Bob told him that he came to town to be present at the opening of the bids invited by the American Motor Car Co. He rehearsed all that happened in the Board room.

"The Board of Managers are going to investigate my financial standing, and I have referred to you, as you told me I could do," said Bob. "I will give you a few points. I am worth about \$30,000 in cash, independent of a piece of property for which I shall pay \$4,000 in a day or two, through a trustee who is to hold it for me. Although this property is valued at between \$4,000 and \$5,000, I would not take \$25,000 for it at this moment, for a part of it contains the very rock that I need for ballasting the dam with. As the possession of that property has enabled me to practically win the contract for the dam, I regard it as an asset easily worth \$25,000 to me. In fact, I look to make more out of it, for the rock can be used for other purposes than the construction of the dam. You may reasonably tell the Board's representative that I am worth \$50,000. But for all that, I will only have \$5,000 with which to begin the work. If you wish to back me in this enterprise you can loan me \$10,000 or even \$5,000, on my note, secured by the property, until the work on the dam is under way and the company has begun to send me the regular payments that will be guaranteed by the contract. Or you can let the note run till the work shall have been completed and the syndicate has settled with me in full. If you will do that, and guarantee my financial ability to put the work through, you will start me on the road to success and fortune."

"I will comply with both your requests with pleasure, Barron," replied the banker. "Indeed, I will make it my business to see that you get the contract."

An hour later Bob took a train back to Westlake, perfectly satisfied that things were going very well with him. He reached his boarding-house in time for dinner, and that evening he called at the Summers cottage to tell Nellie the good news. He learned that her mother had been informed that afternoon that the title company had found the title to the property all right and would guarantee it for the purchase price. The agent would be ready in a couple of days to be present at the closing of the business at Mr. Smith's office. Bob was glad to hear it, as he wanted the matter settled as soon as possible. Three days later he received notice from the chairman of the Board of Managers of the syndicate that the contract had been awarded to him, and he was directed to call at the company's office and sign the papers. Peck, Gilligan & Co. were notified to the effect that Bob had won out and their certified check was returned to them. Contractor Wilson wrote Bob a letter telling him that he would be glad to purchase of him the rock he needed for the foundation of the shops if they could agree on a price. Bob sent him his price, which was slightly higher than the price Wilson would have to pay elsewhere, but as the contractor would save transportation and haulage charges, he promptly closed with the boy. Reader, we would like to tell how Bob carried out his contract to a successful termination, and earned the fair profit he had figured on, but we have not the space to do so, besides, the purpose of this tale was only to show how the young civil engineer became a contractor and won his first big job. The dam contract gave him a reputation that led to other work, and his efforts as a successful contractor soon eclipsed Peck, Gilligan & Co. When he came of age, and was legally entitled to hold real estate and have a regular bank account, the Westlake papers announced the marriage of Nellie Summers and Contractor Bob.

Next week's issue will contain "A NERVY DEAL; or, THE BOY WHO BOUGHT A RAILWAY."

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BLIND AND EFFICIENT

Though totally blind from birth, Allie Marie Hannum, of Little Rock, Ark., twenty-three years of age, is a skilled musician, a soprano soloist, a composer, a teacher and an excellent typist.

She plays the pipe organ and sings regularly in St. Andrew's Cathedral here. She twice has won State prizes for the best musical composition.

Her skill with the typewriter is equal to that of any first class stenographer.

Besides her other accomplishments Miss Hannum is a proficient needlewoman. She is thoroughly feminine and keeps up with the styles despite her handicap.

CURRENT NEWS

NEW FISH AT HONOLULU

A fish of a species hitherto unknown, caught by a Japanese fisherman thirty miles offshore at a depth of 1,200 feet, is on exhibition in Honolulu, T. H.

It weighs 150 pounds, is flat and almost circular. Silver is the chief coloring of its body, with its fins and snout of scarlet and the dorsel, about eighteen inches long, spotted with white. The head is mottled with dark gray and black and the eyes are round and about four inches in diameter.

BARBER USES RADIO TELEPHONE TO AMUSE WAITING CUSTOMERS.

Patrons of a big barber shop in Virginia Park the other day were electrified, so to speak, when sounds of music, interspersed with a masculine voice making announcements of race results and other "newsy" items, floated through the shop from nowhere. Ernest Gist, the proprietor, told customers he had installed a wireless radio telephone, so those waiting for the call of "next" might not be bored.

COMES BACK TO JAIL

When a man breaks out of jail it is usually with the intention of staying away from it, but the rule does not apply to Strother Colley of this county, who escaped from the Mason County jail, Point Pleasant, W. Va., some months ago. He

was sentenced to a four months' term for sending a threatening letter through the mails.

Sheriff John F. Lewis was aroused from his bed by the ringing of the jail doorbell. He responded and was surprised to find Colley standing there. Colley said he had come back to eat.

He had wandered over several States since leaving the jail, had been unable to obtain employment and was also unable to get "three squares" a day. Colley had three months of his sentence to serve, and he figured it was easier to eat by staying in jail than roaming the country.

WATCHFUL DOG SHEPHERD

Last fall O. L. Bernice drove his flocks of sheep down from the grazing lands in the Mount Adams forest reserve to winter quarters near White Salmon, Wash.

In a fog he lost forty head and a dog was missing. No trace of the wanderers was found in a week's diligent search.

One day recently the dog turned up at the home with thirty-nine sheep, all but one having been wintered somewhere under the guidance of the watchful dumb shepherd.

Sheepmen are at a loss to account for the fact that the dog was able to keep off predatory animals, for during the winter wolves, cougars and coyotes prey continually on sheep.

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Daring Dan Dobson

— OR —

THE BOY WHO BEAT THE MOONSHINERS

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

And then he mounted his second best horse and started for further victories.

The men looked at each other, and had a few rounds of drinks all around.

Then they all told themselves how good their boss was to them, how good they were themselves, and other such cheering thoughts. Newcastle had a good system for his men, although they never realized its power over them.

Meanwhile, Dan Dobson, Zachary and Tom were losing no time in covering the distance to Johnsville, where old Zachary's faithful wife was waiting anxiously for them.

"Laws, I thought ye'd never get back!" she cried, with tears of joy streaming down her kind old face, as she embraced her good man, and gave Dan a motherly kiss.

"I never would have, Mrs. Shank, if it hadn't been for this new friend of mine, Tom Dingle, who rescued me at risk of his own life, and by sacrificing his own standing in the neighborhood where he was born and raised."

The old lady patted Tom kindly on the shoulder.

"Well, my lad, ye're a lot better off with such as Dan than back there in that lawless place, for they must pay the price of all their crimes before long, and ye have escaped by yer own act."

"Have you heard from my father?" asked Dan, anxiously, "and my sister Bess? How are they at home?"

"A man by the name of Snodgrass went through here from Newell's Ford, an' he came around to me to make inquiries. I seen he was one of them Newcastle men, an' I didn't tell 'im nothin'. But I calc'late as how he has gone on into Hilldale by this time."

Dan was worried.

"That's that Snakey Snodgrass, as they called him, Zachary, and he is trying to get my father to deed over the land under penalty of their holding me a prisoner."

"We kin end that up, ef it ain't too late, by going right to Hilldale ourselves."

So, without waiting for any sort of a rest, they mounted their steeds again, as soon as they had their repast.

Pressing forward with determination, they made a quick trip to Dan's home town, considering the long miles between it and Johnsville.

How the lad's heart thrilled with joy as they quickened their speed down the main street of the pretty town. People waved and called to him,

as a few recognized him despite his dust and ill-fitting garb.

But the greatest joy was when he reached home, and sliding from Starlight, rushed up the steps and opened the door. He sprang inside with such precipitancy that his sister Bess, who was sitting by his father's side, gave a scream of alarm.

But Dan's father recognized him, and rose weakly from the chair, his face pale with deep emotion.

"My boy! My boy! Back safe and sound. It's wonderful! How did you do it?"

He hugged the lad and such a warm-hearted coming back home as it was.

Dan brought in his two companions who had been tethering the nags outside.

Tom was greatly embarrassed.

Zachary was grinning, as he clasped his old friend's hand.

"Waal, ye've got the bravest lad in the world, colonel, or ye'd a-never seen him ag'in!" said Zachary, who proceeded to tell the story.

Dan would protest when the old man gave especial credit to this or that brave deed, but his father and sister listened eagerly, and their wonder grew.

At last the son interrupted the eager questions by saying:

"Tell me, dad, did Snakey Snodgrass show up here?"

His father shook his head.

"No one of that name, but a man by the name of Brown is at the hotel, and he brought me a letter from Newcastle which you see here."

He showed the lad the demand from the king of moonshiners for a sale of the property at a figure so ridiculous that it was hardly worth the cost of the lawyer's fee.

"That's the man, all right, under a different name."

"We'd better git 'im!" said Zachary, "or he'll git away."

And thus it was that the three hurried out in all their ragged, weather-worn garb, and sprang upon their horses.

To the main hotel they drove, despite the cries of people as they passed in a cloud of dust.

"Here! Stop! Whoa!" directed Dan.

They jumped from their horses, tossed the reins to a darky boy anxious to earn a nickel.

Then up the steps they sprang to the clerk's office of the hotel.

"Where's Mr. Brown?" cried Dan.

The clerk's jaw fell in dumb amazement at this sudden rush, and still more at the revolvers which the three of them held in readiness for use.

"Are—you—robbers?" he gasped.

"No; where is that fellow from the mountains named Brown?" cried Dan. "Speak up, or you'll hear these guns!"

(To be continued)

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

PRIZE FOR COON SKIN

George Horton and Frank Freeman have received \$50 as a prize for a coon skin shipped by them. Freeman and Horton, who hunt entirely for the sport, have well trained hounds. They do their hunting at night along the Palouse River, the prize coon having been killed near the mouth of Rock Creek, almost seven miles from Winona, Wash. During this winter they have killed twenty-nine coons and one lynx.

DECLINES \$1,000 FOR \$5 BILL

J. Bailey, a rancher near Maryville, Cal., refused to sell a \$5 bill for \$1,000. The note bears the date of Dec. 21, 1839, and is an heirloom of the Bailey family. It is printed on one side only. It was signed on the back by the President and Cashier of the City Trust and Banking Company of New York City. It is of the bank note variety, and was issued during the time when the "National Bank" fight was on in Congress. Notes of this variety are very rare, declare collectors.

GREAT FLOCKS KILLED

Gordon, Neb., was treated to an unusual occurrence when the community was visited by great flocks of birds of an unknown kind. At times the flocks were so dense that the sun scarcely could shine through. They were a trifle smaller than the ordinary sparrow, and the air literally was filled with them. Toward evening it began to snow and the birds flew lower and lower until they annoyed the people walking on the street. They seemed dazed and somewhat helpless.

In the morning the ground was covered with their dead bodies. They covered the sidewalks, streets and lawns. Some were killed by flying against buildings, but there were hundreds of them lying on the ground in open spaces with no buildings near.

SEEKING SUNKEN TREASURE

Gold and other valuable metals estimated to be worth \$5,000,000 lost by the sinking of steamships during the great war are to be sought by treasure hunting companies now being organized in this and other countries, according to dispatches received in Washington.

Treasure hunting is spreading over the United States, England and other European countries just as it has swept the world after every great conflict.

Officials of the War and Navy Departments are being deluged with requests for information as to the location of vessels sunk by submarines. The public records of the Customs Service of the United States, England and France are being scrutinized to determine which of the submarines and vessels carried gold and other valuables worth salvage expenses.

In France one treasure hunting corporation is soliciting the public to subscribe to stock on the grounds that the venture may bring in a profit that will reach into thousands of per cent. of gain. In Washington Government officials gen-

erally are not optimistic concerning the chances of success of the treasure hunting companies.

Probably the biggest treasure was lost with the Lusitania which was reported to have nearly \$1,000,000 in gold aboard when she was torpedoed. The Lusitania lies too deep to permit divers to work on her at the present stage of development of most salvage apparatus, officials say.

Engineers and inventors are working to perfect new and unusual diving apparatus, the records of the patent office show. Superdiving bells are planned to cover the treasure which lies too deep for the ordinary methods of salvage. One inventor recently experimented with a steel diving suit to protect the diver from the terrific pressure of the water at the Lusitania's level.

An English salvaging company is at work with suction pumps on the wreck of a Spanish vessel that sank off the coast of Scotland during the invasion of the Armada.

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Beset By Three Desperate Burglars

By KIT CLYDE

In the fall of 1866 I was employed as a clerk in a general store at a cross-roads in Southern Indiana. The store, a church and a blacksmith shop, with two residences, made up the buildings, and the families of the merchant and the blacksmith were the only residents. The country about was thickly settled up, however, and trade was always good. Before the merchant engaged me he announced that I would have to sleep in the store o' nights, and that unless I had pluck enough to defend the place against marauders he did not want me at any price. He showed me a shotgun, a revolver and a spring gun, which were used, or on hand to be used, to defend the place, and the windows were protected with stout blinds and the doors by double locks. The close of the war had drifted a bad population into Indiana. The highways were full of tramps, and there were hundreds of men who had determined to make a living by some other means than labor. Several attempts had been made to rob the store, and it had come to that pass that no clerk wished to sleep there alone.

The merchant seemed satisfied with the answers I gave him, and on a certain Monday morning I went to work. The same night a store about four miles away was broken into and robbed and the clerk seriously wounded. Two nights later three horses were stolen in our neighborhood. At the end of the week a farmer who was on his way home from our store was robbed on the highway. If I had not been a light sleeper from habit, these occurrences would have tended to prevent too lengthy dreams as I lay in my little bedroom at the front of the second story. The revolver was always placed under my pillow, and the shotgun stood within reach. The spring gun was set about midway of the lower floor. It was a double-barreled shotgun, each barrel containing a big charge of buckshot, and the man who kicked the string and discharged the weapon would never know what hurt him.

It did not seem possible that any one could break into the store without arousing me. There was no door to my room, and after the people in the neighborhood had gone to bed I could hear the slightest noise in the store. I had looked the place over for a weak spot, and had failed to find it, but my own confidence came near proving my destruction. I should have told you, in describing the store, that just over the spot where we set the spring gun was an opening through which we hoisted and lowered such good as were stored for a time on the second floor. When not in use this opening was covered by a trapdoor. Toward evening, on the tenth day of my clerkship, I hoisted up a lot of pails and tubs, and had just finished when trade became so brisk that I was called to wait upon customers. Later on I saw that I had left the trap-door open, and I said to myself that I would let it go until I went to bed. The store had the only burglar-proof safe for miles around, and it was customary for the farm-

er who had a hundred dollars or so to leave it with us. He received an envelope in which to inclose it, and he could take out and put in as he liked. On this evening four or five farmers came in to deposit, and, as I afterward figured up, we had about \$1,500 in the safe.

There were two strange faces in the crowd that evening. One belonged to a roughly-dressed, evil-eyed man, who announced himself as a drover, and the other to a professional tramp. I gave the latter a piece of tobacco and some crackers and cheese and he soon went away, and we were so busy up to 8 o'clock that I did not give the drover much attention. When we came to shut up the store he had gone from my mind altogether. We counted up the cash, made some changes in the day book, and it was about 10 o'clock when the merchant left. I was tired out, and I took a candle and made the circuit of the store, set the spring gun and went to bed. I had to pass within six feet of the trap-door as I went to my room, but I did not see it. It was a rather chilly night in October, and we had no fires yet, and as I got under the blankets the warmth was so grateful that I soon fell asleep. It was the first night I had gone to bed without thinking of robbers and wondering how I should act in case they came in. I did not know when I fell asleep. I suddenly found myself half upright in bed, and there was an echo in the store, as if the fall of something had aroused me. It was 1 o'clock, and I had been asleep almost three hours. Leaning on my elbow, I strained my ears to catch the slightest sound, and after a minute I heard a movement downstairs. While I could not say what it was, a sort of instinct told me that it was by some human being.

Everything on the street was as silent as the grave. My window curtain was up, and I could see that the sky had thickened up and was very black. I did not wait for the noise to be repeated. I was just as sure that some one was in the store as if I had already seen him, and I crept softly out of bed, drew on my trousers, and moved out into the big room, having the revolver in my hand. There was no door at the head of the stairs. I intended to go there and listen down the stairway. As I was moving across the room, which was then pretty clear of goods as far as the trap-door, I suddenly recollected this opening, and changed my course to reach it. It was terribly dark in the room, and one unfamiliar with the place would not have dared to move a foot. Half way to the trap I got down on my hands and knees, and as I reached the opening, I settled down on my stomach. There was a dim light downstairs. That settled the fact that some one was in the store. After a minute I heard whispers, then the movement of feet, then a certain sound which located the intruders to a foot. They were at the safe on the front of the store. I drew myself forward and looked down the opening. I could see a lighted candle and two or three dark figures at the safe, and I could hear the combination being worked. My first thought was to drop my hand down and open fire in their direction, but I remembered that we had so many articles hanging up that no bullet had a chance of reaching to the safe. I was wondering what to do when I heard one of the men whisper:

"It's all nonsense. We might work here a week and not hit it."

"But I told you to bring the tools and you wouldn't," protested another.

"Oh, dry up!" put in a third voice. "What we want to do is to go up and bring that counter-hopper down and make him open the box."

"I'll give the cussed thing a few more trials," said the first man, and I heard him working away again. My eyes could not have told me the number of robbers, but my ears had. There were three of them, and they were no doubt desperate and determined men. They spoke of bringing me down to open the safe as if no resistance was anticipated or taken into account. Indeed, they might well reason that they had me at their mercy. The rain was now falling, the night was very dark, and a pistol shot in the store could not have been heard in either of the dwellings. If they reflected that I might be armed, they would have offset it with the fact that I was a boy of eighteen with a girl's face and probably a girl's nerve. I don't deny that I was a bit rattled, and that my lip would quiver in spite of me, but I was at the same time fully determined to protect the store if it cost me my life. How to get at the fellows was what bothered me, but that trouble was soon solved.

"There!" whispered the man at the combination as he let go of it, "I won't fool here another minute. That kid knows the combination, and we can make him work it. Come on."

They were coming upstairs. The best place for me would be at the head of the stairway. The stairs had a half turn in them, and I would fire upon the first man who came within range. I heard the men coming back to the stairway, and my nerve gave way. It wasn't from cowardice, but the knowledge that I was to kill a human being upset me. I decided to retreat to my room, and, if they persisted in coming that far, I would shoot. The trio had rubbers on their feet, but they came upstairs without trying very hard to prevent making a noise. The one who came first had the candle, and, as he got to the head of the stairs, I saw a knife in his hand. They made no delay in approaching my room, and, with a great effort, I braced myself for what I saw must happen. They could not see me until within three or four feet of the door, and their first intimation that I was out of bed was when they heard me call out:

"Stop or I'll shoot!"

I had them covered with the weapon, and for fifteen seconds there was dead silence. Then they got a plan. The man with the candle dashed it on the floor, and I suppose they meant to rush in on me in the dark, but I checkmated it by opening fire. They then either meant to retreat downstairs or toward the rear of the floor, for I saw the three together moving off and fired at their dim figures. Three seconds later there was a great shout or horror, followed by the tremendous report of the double-barreled spring gun, and then there was absolute silence. I think I stood in the door, shaking like a leaf, for fully three minutes before the silence was broken by a groan. Then it came to me that the robbers had fallen through the open door upon the cord leading to the gun.

I struck a match, lighted my own candle, and going to the opening, saw three bodies lying below. Running back to the bedroom to recharge my revolver, I then went downstairs to investigate.

It was as I suspected. The three had pitched down together. The top of one's head had been blown off by the shot, a second had a hole in his chest as big as your fist, while the third, who was responsible for the groans, was severely wounded in both legs. It was three months before he could be put on trial, and he then got four years in prison. The whole thing was a put-up job. The "drover" was a Chicago burglar called "Clawhammer Dick," and he had hidden himself in the store that night and then let his pals in by the back door. They had a horse and wagon in the rear of the building, and the plan was to rob the store of goods as well as to get at the money in the safe. A bit of carelessness on my part not only saved the store and probably my life, but wiped out a very desperate gang.

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WHISKERS CRAZE HITS CITY

Sacramento, Cal., has gone crazy on whiskers. Every one who can grow them is wearing them, from City Manager Seavey and Mayor Elkin down to the young bloods who are going in for a bobbed style. It's all on account of a whisker show, scheduled for the week of May 23-28, when a prize of \$49 will be awarded the wearer of the winning beard. Length, appearance and luxuriance of growth will be determining features.

Sacramento is preparing for a grand celebration of the days of '49, and the males have decided to wear real whiskers in emulation of the sturdy pioneers of the gold rush. The movement started among a few old timers, but now it has been taken up by the many.

And are the 150 barbers of Sacramento tearing their hair in desperation at the sudden depression in the shave market? Far from it. Instead of getting 15 cents for a chin scrape they are charging anywhere from 50 cents to \$1 for daily whisker treatments.

Mirrors in front of shops are crowded each day by men who inspect the development of their beards with hopeful interest. Goatees, Van Dykes, Smith Bros. blacks and Lord Dundrearys are developing under the watchful care of the whisker experts. Hundreds, however, have adopted no particular style, preferring to let 'em sprout to the four winds as nature directs.

The whisker growing contest had its origin in the formation of the "whiskers club," whose members, desirous of emulating the facial flora of their pioneer forebears, marched to the Post-office steps and "took the pledge" to remain "behind the brush" until the '49 celebration is over. The City Manager, Mayor and members of the City Council headed the weird procession.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

NEW YORK, MAY 12, 1922

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

WILL WAIT FOR BLIND AT WHISTLE

Blind residents of Denver, Col., soon will be assured of safe passage across busy streets by means of commanding blasts on police whistles which will be furnished to them free by the city, according to Jim Goodheart, heard of the City's Department of Public Welfare. When a blind person blows his whistle, traffic officers will see that all traffic is suspended until the blind pedestrian is safely across, Goodheart said.

SMALLEST STILL

Among the many odd contrivances for manufacturing illicit beverages is one recently brought in by J. A. Roberts, Federal Prohibition enforcement officer. While searching for a still at a place some seventeen miles north of Gadsden on a place occupied by a man named Foster, a still of one-gallon capacity was captured. The composite parts of the still were a one-gallon syrup bucket, a one-pound coffee can, a 10-cent snuff box—this with a wooden stopper for the cap through which a joint of cane was thrust to be used as a worm. The outfit was neatly made and will, if preserved, be a valuable addition to some future museum.

RUM SOLD AT 33 CENTS A QUART

One hundred years ago rum sold at 2 shillings and 8 pence a quart. This price is contained in an old account book, which is among the heirlooms of Delos Hatch, Oakfield, Wis., and which was used by his grandfather at his store at Bre-mar's Corners, N. Y., a century ago.

The old accounts in the book are still readable, but the figures are somewhat jumbled as the accounts were written during the period when the States changed from the English style of money to the American.

Labor, according to the figures in the book, was cheap, a day's chopping having brought one customer 5 shillings in 1821, with 2 shillings extra for the use of a horse.

BIG GUNS LOST IN RIVER

Two 15-inch naval guns sank to the bottom of the Potomac River near Pope's Creek, Charles

County, Md., recently, when the barges on which they were being transported were tilted by the high wind.

The guns, which were new, had just been tested at the Government reservation at Indian Head, Md., and were being taken to Dahlgren, Va., for further testing. There were about eight or ten guns in the group, and each of them was placed on a separate barge.

The string of barges was proceeding slowly across the Potomac River when the wind, which had been blowing strongly all afternoon, became more severe. Two of the barges tilted heavily and the huge guns slid off.

LAUGHS

The Waitress—It looks as if the new boarder is going to stay. Mistress—I noticed he helped himself twice to the prunes.

Dick—I lost \$50,000 in less than half an minute last night. Fred—How did that happen? Dick—I proposed to Miss Bullion, and she said "no."

Weary—A dog is one o' the few animals that'll follow a man. Walker—Yes; one was follerin' me yesterday so fast I could hardly keep ahead of it.

Miss Foy—George was reading a book "How to Propose Without Getting Excited." Maid—Yes, Helen sent one to every young man she knew.

Little Nephew—Auntie, did you marry an Indian? Aunt—Why do you ask such silly questions, Freddy? Little Nephew—Well, I saw some scalps on your dressing table.

Teacher—If a man gets five dollars for three hours' work, what would he get if he worked ten hours a day for three days? Small Boy—He'd most likely get fired from the union.

Old Lady—Conductor, there ain't going to be a collision, I hope. Conductor—I guess not. Old Lady—I want you to be very keeful; I've got two dozen eggs in this basket.

"Nevertheless," contended the Giddy Young Bachelor, "I insist that woman is superior to man." "If you were married," chuckled the old married man, "you would simply admit it."

Johnnie, a bright boy of six years, while being fixed up for school, observing his little overcoat much the worse for wear, and having more mended places than he admired, turned quickly to his mother, and asked: "Ma, is pa rich?" "Yes, very rich, Johnnie; he is worth two millions and a half." "What in, ma?" "Oh, he values you at one million, me at one million, and baby at half a million." Johnnie, after thinking a moment, said: "Ma, tell papa to sell the baby, and buy us some clothes."

FROM ALL POINTS

STRONG WIND

"The river is so strong at times that it blows fish out of the river onto the bank," was the statement of L. V. Creel, United States Indian Service, before the Washoe Fish and Game Protective Association, Reno, Nev., recently in a plea for "runarounds" to allow fish to come up the Truckee River out of Pyramid Lake.

A shallow bar has been formed where the Tuckee River empties into the lake, due to a drop between nine and ten feet in the lake's level during the last two years.

Creel says trout attempting to reach the upper waters of the Tuckee meet with obstacles in crossing the bar and frequently are blown out of the water.

STOWAWAY NEAR DEATH

When the after hatches of the Royal Mail steamship *Orbita*, fourteen days out of Hamburg for New York, were lifted the other morning and longshoremen entered the lower hold they heard faint moans. Lying on a bale of cargo they found a nineteen-year-old boy, Fritz Ahrens of Bremen, too weak and emaciated to speak. They summoned Capt. Matthews and Dr. F. R. Lucas, the ship's surgeon. The boy was taken to the ship's hospital and partly revived.

Hardly able to speak and only in a whisper, the boy told the doctor that he crept into the hold at Hamburg as a stowaway, not thinking he would be battened down. He had a little food and water which lasted, he thought, four days. For the last ten days he suffered from hunger and thirst and two days ago lay down on a bale to die.

A FISHERMEN'S SHACK

High and dry on the beach at Cordova, Alaska, there is an old hull, sometimes used by fishermen as a shanty, which once was the \$10,000 yacht *Restless*, owned by Dr. R. N. Gordon of Seattle.

For eight years the *Restless*, after being purchased by the United States National Forest Service from Dr. Gordon, was used to cruise along Alaska shores and suffered damage several times. In 1911 a storm drove the boat on the rocks, ripping a hole in her hull; in 1914 an explosion in her stern gasoline tank wrecked the after end, and later the boat, while in Esther Passage, collided head-on with a sleeping whale. The *Restless* was so disabled she was towed to Cordova and beached.

Becoming unseaworthy, she was dismantled and advertised for sale. A fisherman bought the hull for \$15 and it is now used as bachelor's quarters.

MISSING HEIRESS FOUND

Living in rather poor circumstances at Shamrock, a coke town near Brownsville, Pa., Mrs. Ellen Chappell McCaffrey, heir to more than \$10,000, has been located through the medium of a local newspaper.

Mrs. McCaffrey declared that, although she still remembered the large sum left her by her father, she had virtually given up hope of ever

receiving the inheritance, as the last she had heard a trustee had disappeared with the funds. She says that she will make immediate preparations for a trip to England to claim the fortune.

Mrs. McCaffrey's husband, Johnnie, has been employed at Shamrock for a number of years. About two years ago he sustained an injury to his knee, and for about a year received compensation. At present he is attempting to support his wife and one son, aged ten, on a wage of \$2 a day.

PYTHONS EASILY TAKEN

In the Maley Peninsula quite a little industry has recently sprung up among planters and others whose business takes them into the jungle.

The snakes used for the purpose of making shoes are mostly pythons, and these are usually caught by coolies in the ordinary course of their work or on expeditions specially organized to search for them.

The python has a beautiful marked skin, is easy to capture, and attains a great size, being found up to thirty feet in length.

The coolies are paid so much per foot for live specimens, dead ones being useless, as the reptile has to be skinned immediately after it is killed to obtain the best results.

All that is required to effect the capture of even the largest of these snakes is a forked stick, a noose and a stout pole.

When he sights his victim the coolie approaches and places the forked stick behind the back of the head and pins the animal to the ground. A noose is then slipped over the head and the snake usually most obligingly winds itself around the pole and is carried back to more civilized quarters, where it is sold to the "curer."

Pythons are most voracious feeders, and if found, as is usual, after a meal, may be handled with impunity.

Occasionally, however, a very different customer obtrudes himself upon the scene—the King Cobra. The contempt felt for the python quickly gives place to the extremest caution when facing one of these deadly inhabitants of the jungle.

The King Cobra attains a length of from 15 to 20 feet, and will attack a man without provocation. It is seldom caught alive, as the skin is valueless, but I have seen one caught in the way I have described. This specimen was 17 feet in length, and it took three men to carry it. If a man is bitten by one of these snakes, death results within 10 minutes.

Strange tales are told by natives of pythons from 60 feet to 70 feet in length that have been known to devour a rhinoceros, but they may be taken as legendary.

Jungle pigs, however, frequently fall victims to the python, and I was recently told by a Malay that he saw one in the jungle with a medium sized pig half way into its mouth.

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GOOD READING

MUSKRATS BURROW THROUGH BANKS TO ESCAPE

Muskrats trapped under the ice in the reservoir that supplies the Borough of Railroad, York County, Pa., have drained off all the water by burrowing through the banks to escape.

This, at least, is the theory of those who investigated when it was found that the reservoir was dry. It is believed that the last heavy freeze imprisoned several muskrats in the reservoir and that the heavy snow that fell immediately afterward caused the animals to burrow for freedom below the water level.

Families that depended on the reservoir for their household supply of water have been compelled to turn temporarily to wells and springs.

BONDS IN COAL BIN

The corner of a Liberty bond protruding from the door of the stove into which he was shoveling coal led to the discovery by R. A. Mitchell, railroad agent at Waterlick, Va., of about \$75,000 in bonds, concealed in the station coal bin.

Some of the bonds were registered in the name of officials of the Grottoes (Va.) State Bank and part, at least, of the cache was believed to represent loot obtained from that institution when it was robbed June 30, 1921.

Two-thirds of the bonds recovered were registered, the remainder being railroad and industrial issues. Mitchell said he had been scooping up "papers" with the coal for several days, and he was speculating the other day as to what may have been the intrinsic cost of the station fire during the recent cold spell.

LONG HOG DRIVE IN SNOW

Jesse Speck, a rancher in the Big Bad Lands, South Dakota, has just completed a hog drive that is likely to stand as a record for some time.

He started from his ranch with 200 hogs in prime condition, to drive them to this town for shipment. As the roads were in bad condition from drifted snow, and the distance to Scenic is 35 miles, Speck had difficulty in getting the necessary number of cowboys to turn hog drivers, but he finally got started.

The drive required ten days, through almost insurmountable obstacles, and when the one-time prize hogs arrived here they were hungry, thin, sick and nearly frozen.

Speck and his helpers had found it necessary to continually prod, push, coax, bully and plead with the unwilling porkers to make time. Hogs which averaged 200 pounds on starting weighed in on arrival here at less than an average of 125 pounds.

FINDS OUR STAMPS FAULTY

Criticism of the methods of printing United States stamps has been voiced by Fred J. Melville, one of England's leading postage stamp authorities, in connection with the recent discovery of the forgeries of the two-cent red issue.

These forgeries were detected quickly, and it is doubted that any were used for letter postage.

"Most collectors," said Mr. Melville, "have noticed the wide variations in the United States stamps of recent years, due to the experimenting at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing with new processes of printing. Stamps of like design and denomination have been printed from finely engraved steel plates, from rotary recess plates, from surface printing plates and by the offset method, and these have been in circulation simultaneously. The different qualities of impression make them all look different, and this is a dangerous state of affairs in a country whose stamps are being used to the extent of millions every day.

"Where the genuine stamps vary so much it is difficult to detect or even suspect a forgery, and it is not surprising that some one has taken advantage of the recent confusion in stamp printing in the United States. There are wide avenues for the disposal of the forged stamps in the countless mail-order firms in America. This is, however, the first forgery of a current United States stamp since 1894."

OLD WOMAN TRAPPER PERISHES IN MIRE

An aged woman who had been a trapper for a lifetime died a terrible death in the St. Clair flats, Michigan, when, with a steeltrap fast to her arm, she tried to wade to help, only to be mired in the soft mud. She struggled against the grip of the slime that slowly sucked her down until, waist deep, she died of exhaustion.

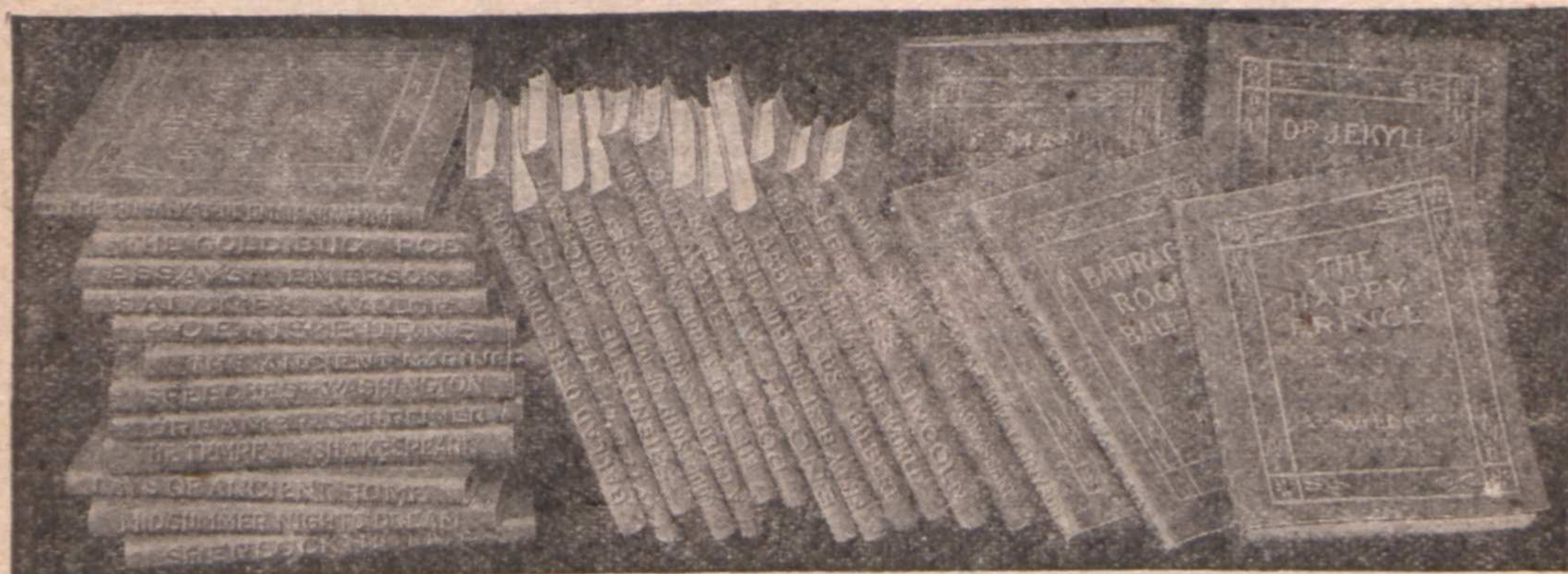
Searching parties reached her too late and today she was buried in this little community where for fifty years she had held her own with rod and trap. Her name was Mrs. Harriet Sears and she was 72 years old.

Several days ago Mrs. Sears left her flats home in a duck boat to trap muskrat and mink. She did not return in the evening and a search was made for her. Her body lay close to shore, sunk to the waist in the oozy channel bottom when the searchers reached her next morning. Gripped around her right arm was a large steel muskrat trap. It was apparent that her arm had become caught in the trap while she was in the duck boat. She had left the boat and had got to shallow water a few feet from shore when she began to sink.

It was evident that her losing struggle to release herself, aggravated by the pain from the cruel teeth of the trap, had brought the mercy of exhaustion and then death.

In the flats section the woman as well as the men are expert trappers and fish hunters and Mrs. Sears for years had gone out alone in her duck boat to lay her traps. She was one of the best known pioneers of the flats section.

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Each of these volumes is complete—this is not that abomination, a collection of extracts; the paper is a high-grade white wove antique, equal to that used in books selling at \$1.50 to \$2.00; the type is clear and easy to read; the binding is a beautiful limp material, tinted in antique copper and green, and so handsomely embossed as to give it the appearance of hand-tooled leather.

And, though each of these volumes is complete (the entire set contains over 3,000 pages), a volume can be carried conveniently wherever you go, in your pocket or purse; several can be placed in your hand-bag or grip, or the entire thirty can be placed on your library table "without cluttering it up" as one purchaser expressed it.

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Producing such fine books is, in itself, no great achievement. But the aim of this enterprise has been to produce them at a price that anyone in the whole land could afford. The only way we could do this was to manufacture them in quantities of nearly a million at a time—to bring the price down through "quantity production." And we relied, for our sales, on our faith that Americans would rather read classics than trash. What happened? **OVER TEN MILLION** of these volumes have already been purchased by people in every walk of life.

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